



Voices of the Young

Towards Habitat
Young Visionary Award, 2009

India's Youth Energy - Power and Potential



India Habitat Centre

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India Habitat Centre is involved in building care, commitment and awareness in the citizenship for issues of common concern; and strives to position the Habitat discourse in the public domain for better governance for framers and consumers of public policy.

The essays in this publication constitute the short-listed submissions for the Habitat Young Visionary Award, 2009 and have therefore been carried verbatim.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the India Habitat Centre.

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Contents

The Jury & The Chief Guest.....	4
Foreword	5
Vishes Kothari - Winner of Habitat Young Visionary Award, 2008	6
Sayan Ganguly - Why I Will Always Remember YVA - 2008.....	7
India's Youth Energy – Power and Potential – Your Vision	
Abdul Haleem Kidwai - Aligarh Muslim University.....	9
Anurag Dutta - BITS Pilani, Rajasthan	13
Apoorv Parag Tripathi - ILS Law College, Pune	16
Devangana Kalita - Miranda House, Delhi University	19
Ipshita Ghosh - Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi	24
Namarata Amarnath - National Law University, Lucknow.....	27
Neeraj Kumar Singh - IIT, Chennai	31
Ninad Mangesh Kulkarni - IIT, Mumbai	34
Nishtha Mishra - SRCC, New Delhi	39
Parth Patel - IIT, Delhi.....	42
Prashant Gautam - Gwalior Engineering College, Gwalior.....	46
Sayan Ganguly - IIT, Chennai	50
Sayan Supratim Das - ILS Law College, Pune.....	53
Shashank Kumar - St. Xavier's College, Mumbai.....	57
उत्कर्ष अमिताभ - दिल्ली कॉलेज ऑफ इंजीनियरिंग (यांत्रिकी).....	61

The Jury



Preliminary Round

Professor T.K.V. Subramanian
Department of History, Delhi University

Ms. Sangeeta Luthra Sharma
Professor, Delhi University

Mr. Ashish Joshi
Director, Policy & Planning
Ministry of Minority Affairs

Professor Rohit Wanchoo
Department of History, Delhi University

Professor Abhay Kumar Dubey
Editor, Indian Languages Programme
Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

Mr. Rehan Fazal
Desk Editor, BBC World Service

Ms. Gopa Sabharwal
Department of Sociology
Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi

Mr. Nitin Srivastava
Producer, BBC World Service

Semi Finals

Ms. Advaita Kala
Internationally Acclaimed Author

Mr. Ravi Singh
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief
Penguin Books India &
Board Member, Chintan

Ms. Bulbul Sharma
Painter and Writer

Ms. Viky Arya
Sculptor, Painter, Author,
Poet, Lyricist, Illustrator

Mr. Mike Pandey
Filmmaker and Conservationist
Two-time Winner of Green Oscar

Finals

Mr. Pavan K. Varma
Writer-Diplomat & Currently Director
General of the Indian Council for
Cultural Relations, New Delhi

Mr. Inder Malhotra
Respected Journalist of India

Mr. Niret Alva
President, Miditech

Professor Alok Rai
Department of English
Delhi University

Mr. Nikhil Mirchandani
Managing Director
National Geographic Channel
South Asia

The Chief Guest

Shri Abhishek Manu Singhvi
Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha)



Foreword

India Habitat Centre has been engaging with the youth who are the successor generation and form the largest component of our population through the Habitat Young Visionary Award competition for the last five years. This initiative provides a platform for young undergraduates to share their thoughts on building a society of their choice based on a theme that enables and urges the young minds to search their values and relate them to the future. It is simultaneously an opportunity to give voice to their hopes and aspirations and to defend them before a panel of eminent judges who look for pragmatism, cogency and the breadth of the dream in their individual statements.

The Award is a fully funded fellowship for a summer programme in Cambridge University, U.K. The second winner is awarded an internship with the Nat Geo Channel in Hong Kong and three others awarded internships in reputed NGOs.

The competition is open to students all over India who go through three rounds of rigorous participation at the end of which the finalists are chosen to compete for the Award.

In this sixth year the theme is: India's Youth Energy: Power & Potential: Your Vision.

We have been very encouraged by the growing interest in this initiative and are emboldened to partner this quest of the young to dare to dream. This year we have had 160 entries and quite a 'Pan-India' participation. This is very rewarding and provides a sense of assurance that the future is surely going to be safe in the hands of these young visionaries.

The fifteen best entries from the submissions were selected by our panel and their vision forms the content of this document. The five finalists will emerge from this group and will eventually compete for the coveted fellowship in Cambridge University and the internship in Hong Kong. India Habitat Centre is bringing out this document to share with you the thinking of the young.

Raj Liberhan
Director, India Habitat Centre



Winner of Habitat Young Visionary Award, 2008

I grew up by literally devouring each and every book written by Enid Blyton. Thus I had formed mental pictures of nearly every aspect of England- the policemen, the bikes with baskets in front, the cocker spaniels with perennially wagging tails, the cows (preferably named Buttercup or Daisy), women (probably a Mrs. Smith and a Mrs. Baker) with lace gloves and hats at tea tables laid with hot scones with honey-indeed everything.

Thus this voyage to Cambridge became one of rediscovery- the architecture, the people, the food, the lifestyle: an entire culture.

The journey was not one of a tourist but that of a student- and the summer school at Cambridge is a confluence of students from a staggering number of countries. My own group of acquaintances formed there comprised students from Greece, Italy, Norway, France, United States, Costa Rica, Iceland-I already find myself forgetting. The student community was diverse not only geographically- some of my classmates were past the age of sixty! To add to the sheer awe in which I found myself at meeting people from so many places at the same time was the sheer fact that it was the University of Cambridge-half the authors of the books we read, half the writers of the text books we use and half the scientists whose laws we study come from here.

Once we had settled in, time flew by-in the middle of trips to London and walks to Grantchester; in the middle of evenings spent in tea shops in the town center and weekends exploring the colleges; in the middle of going to the museums and paying visits to the libraries; in the middle of lectures and writing our papers. Looking back everything just seems a haze..

Truly Enid Blyton lived up to England and England to her.

Vishes Kothari



Why I Will Always Remember YVA-2008

When I first came to know about the Youth Visionary Award in early October of 2007, I never realized I will end up as the runners up in the eventual finals. The fact that the preliminaries involved writing an essay was what attracted me to the event in the first place. I always thought I could write decently but never thought I could actually go on stage and give expression to my thoughts on paper. After I got through the preliminaries, I thought I had come to the end of the road as the remaining two rounds involved speaking.

Maybe the fact that I really did not expect to do too well helped me finally. The semi-finals were more intimidating than the finals. The previous night I was lodged at the International Youth Hostel where I met Rasaal from NIT Raipur who was one of the semi-finalists. It took me a few minutes to understand that I was talking to a delightfully insightful individual and we talked deep into the night. We did not let competition get in the way and discussed each other's ideas in detail and suggested improvements to each other. The following day we reached the India Habitat Center early and was really impressed by the campus as this was our first visit there. We met Priyanka who had been helping us with all our arrangements till then and then went on to have lunch. Soon it was time for the event.

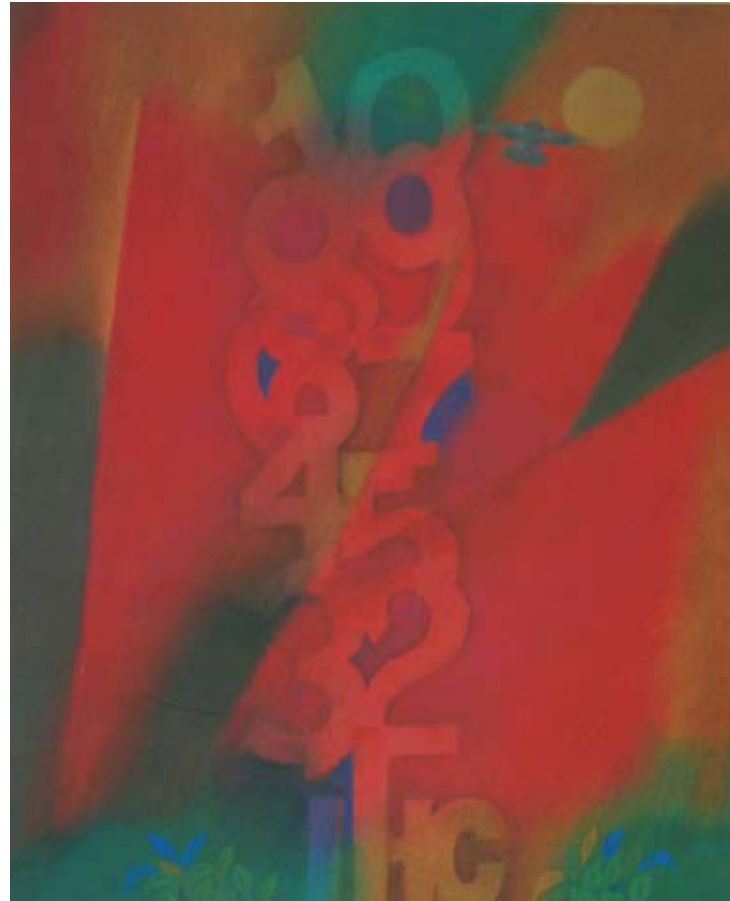
Most of the finalists were from some of the most elite institutions of the country and they had an air of quiet confidence and conviction about them which was pretty nerve-racking. The event started on time and all the fifteen speakers spoke after one another. The ideas were convincingly put forward and most of them centered around education reform including mine. It clearly showed that the current crop of students are dissatisfied by the way they are taught at their schools and colleges. The highlight of the semi-finals was the immensely stirring speech by the last speaker who had a chronic speech defect. Egged on by the judges

and the audience, she managed to complete her talk on time and received a standing ovation.

I apparently had performed well enough to be selected for the finals. It was an extraordinary feeling to have triumphed among such talented students and the elation I felt having presented my idea in a convincing manner was something which stayed with me for quite a while. I returned for the finals having made the fundamental corrections to my presentation which had become evident during the semifinal. I was more nervous this time especially as my uncle and aunt were among the audience. I did falter a bit during my speech and ended up as the runners up and winning an internship at National Geographic Hong Kong. The adulation and attention received in the immediate aftermath was overwhelming and very humbling. The confidence I gained from the whole event has stood me in good stead and I have never believed that something is impossible ever again.

But this feeling of self-confidence was not the biggest gain from this wonderful event. Something else happened in the IHC which changed my life forever and which makes me thank my stars everyday for having participated in this event. I met a girl from St Stephens college who was a part of the audience during both the semi-final and the finals. Our chance encounter in the IHC led to innumerable more conversations before we finally realized that we had fallen in love with each other. And today both of us look back very fondly on the event which let us meet for the first time. I may have been the runners up on the day of the finals but in the long run, I think I emerged as the biggest winner among everyone present.

Sayan Ganguly



India's Youth Energy -
Power and Potential - Your Vision



Abdul Haleem Kidwai

India's Youth Energy - Power and Potential - Your Vision

Introduction – India's Youth Energy

India's youth energy is no ordinary energy. It may not light up the streets but will enlighten the nation. It may not run industries but will run the society. It may not power up homes but will empower the masses.

India's youth energy is a limitless and boundless resource but an untapped one. It has not been harnessed because for too long the youth have been waiting for someone else to discover their power and potential. They have been waiting for a Messiah and finally the Messiah is here, the Indian youth themselves. The Indian youth have heard and understood Barack Obama's message: "We are the change we have been waiting for."

Power and Potential

George Bernard Shaw had once remarked: "Youth is wasted on the young" but he had never seen the youth of 21st century India. The Indian youth numbering around 410 million are not letting their youth go to waste, they are changing not only the face of India but of the world.

This large population of India was in the recent past thought to be a major obstacle in the path of economic development but has now become the engine of economic growth. Economists such as Kaushik Basu have hailed it as India's demographic dividend. He points out : "By 2020, average age of an Indian will be 29 years and the dependency ratio will be 0.4. There will be a rise of bread winners and this will continue to fire India's high growth rate."

However, the power and potential of the Indian youth is not limited to the economic growth. The influence of India's youth energy is being felt in every sphere of society. It has the potential to change the dynamics of society and in the past it has successfully done so. India's youth energy is not a new phenomenon.

In Ancient India, Chandragupta Maurya had displayed exceptional leadership qualities as a youngster. Another important historical figure, Akbar the Great, was a mere boy when he came to power but was successful in laying down the foundation of powerful, plural, tolerant and secular Indian empire. Gandhiji himself was young man when he was thrown out of the railway compartment and the path he chose as a young man would bring the mighty British empire to its knees.

However, all these great men had equally illustrious mentors, Maurya had the brilliant Chanakya, Akbar was taken care of by the able Bairam Khan and Gandhiji was guided by a towering personality, Gokhale. Thus, we must bear in mind that the power and potential of the present Indian youth, as was in the past, depends greatly on the guidance they receive from the elders of the society. The greatest source of strength of India's youth energy is the attitude of the youth. According to a Forbes report: "Indian youth are strikingly more optimistic about their future and also about the future of society. The general picture in other countries is that young people tend to be personal optimists and societal pessimists."

This is what sets the Indian apart from the rest. They believe in the future of society, in the future of India.

It is this optimism which has given them the hope to reform even our murky politics. The youth have actively been involved in initiatives such as Jaago Re and Association of Democratic Reforms, which have taken upon them the unenviable task of making our politics more accountable and transparent. Some young Indians have gone a step further; for instance, Ishita Chaudhry went on to establish a Youth Parliament. This Parliament has a core group of thirty youngsters and is involved in over ninety projects including one on youth voters.

"The Indian youth are not only aware of global issues but are also acting and responding to those issues. For example, the problems posed by Climate Change are of epic proportions but the Indian youth remain undeterred."

The Indian youth are not only aware of global issues but are also acting and responding to those issues. For example, the problems posed by Climate Change are of epic proportions but the Indian youth remain undeterred. The youth have established the Indian Youth Climate Network. Furthermore, they are particular about self-help and taking initiative, they describe themselves and their work in

the following words: "We are the youth of India. Climate change is going to affect OUR future. The decision makers of today, won't be around in fifty years time to see the effects of their inaction. Hence we need take the action required."

The power of change that the youth and children, command is tremendous. Whether it is saying no to crackers or plastic bags or protecting the environment, the government is targeting the youth, especially children to get the message across society.

Unlike the elders, the youth are both receptive of the message and are willing to take necessary action.

My Vision

I, like any other young citizen of India, believe that my country can change for the better. Rather, I would go on to the extent of saying that not only can India change but it will soon transform into a global superpower.

India's time to take its rightful place in the world has come once again. Right until the 18th century, India was a world power until the brutal process of colonization reduced it to a colony of the English. But it has been sixty years since the British left, now the destiny of our country is in our hands, the hands of the youth. Therefore, I visualise that the youth will take India to new heights and fulfill APJ Kalam's Vision of a developed India by 2020. No doubt, this is an uphill and onerous task but not only is it of utmost importance, it is also imperative.

To achieve the worthy goal of building a prosperous and flourishing India for everyone, not just a privileged few, the youth will have to adopt a multi-pronged approach to deal with the varied and complex problems of India. However, none of these problems are insurmountable as long as the youth of India are willing to struggle and are ready to face the challenges in a strategic manner.

Here are some of my views as to what the youth can do to make a positive impact on our country.

First, while the goal of making India a superpower is praiseworthy, the youth should keep in mind that they are not overly swayed by the draw of power. As Noam Chomsky reminds us that we should become “moral agents, not servants of power.” The youth should adopt a holistic vision of development which encompasses not only economic and technological advancement but also moral standing. The goal of the youth should be to establish India not only as a superpower but as a moral superpower. The Indian youth are fortunate that they can draw upon India’s rich heritage to achieve this.

After all, it was this moral India that Gandhiji gave his life for and Nehru dreamt of, an India which is not feared, rather respected by others. Respect comes not by brute force but by moral authority.

Second, a common complaint of the common man is the degradation of politics. The Indian youth have both the necessary strength and optimism to address this complaint and bring about a sea change in our political scene. Unlike the elders of society, cynicism has not completely permeated their consciousness and that is enough to bring the desired change. The Indian youth will have to join hands to defeat the politics of division with the politics of consensus.

The youth must send a strong message that the politics of hate and coercion is unacceptable. It ought to be replaced by the politics of consensus, in which all the players involved agree that their goal will be the same, to serve national interest instead of parochial interests. However, this does not mean that the diversity of our vibrant political culture be undermined. Rather, debates, discussions and disagreements are not only inevitable in a nation of one billion people but also desirable. But these differences should be limited to the operational level while at the fundamental level all parties should be striving to achieve the same target, a developed India.

Third, the Indian youth should remain alert. As Aristotle rightly said: “Youth is easily deceived because it is quick to hope.” The youth should ensure that they are not being used as pawns by bigger powers, especially in politics. For instance,

during the Other Backward Classes reservation controversy, the youth became a force to reckon with. But the politicians were successful in dividing the youth in two camps; pro-reservation and anti-reservation. Ideally, the youth should not have allowed themselves to be ensnared by vested political interests. Rather they should have expanded the realm of the reservation debate, instead of taking sides.

The Indian youth have the capability to come forward with creative solutions for the many problems faced by India. Only when the Indian youth will show courage and present their positive and constructive ideas, which they have in abundance, will India progress.

Fourth, the slogan “Unity in Diversity” is an oft-repeated one but with the rapid rise of communalism, casteism, regionalism and sectarianism, it is beginning to sound hollow. It is the responsibility of the youth to make it meaningful again. To do so, the youth will have to take up the monumental tasks of national integration and community cohesion.

To achieve these goals, society as a whole needs to be sensitized. The youth are well suited to do this. First, they have the energy to mobilize public opinion and create awareness about these pressing issues quickly. Second, unlike the elders of the society their opinions about the “Other” are not that rigid and their prejudices are not so strong. But before the youth can spread the message of harmony in

“The Indian youth have the capability to come forward with creative solutions for the many problems faced by India. Only when the Indian youth will show courage and present their positive and constructive ideas, which they have in abundance, will India progress.”

society, they will have to free themselves from the shackles of organizations which spew hate in the name of religion or caste or region. To do so, the enlightened and broad minded youth, which are many in number, will have to take proactive steps, such as organizing youth festivals, to protect the society from the virulent message of destructive and anti-national forces.

Fifth, there is an urgent need to bridge the rural-urban divide. This divide is stark, Arvind Adiga in his Booker winning book, *The White Tiger*, has labeled urban India as Light and rural India as Darkness. Unfortunately, even some well read and educated youth are oblivious to the problems of rural India but the youth are more than willing to explore and learn about rural India.

India does not have compulsory military training for the youth but the government can adopt a policy of compulsory service for a particular period of time in rural India. The government could attach the youth, especially university students, to the development programmes it runs in rural areas. This policy will have the dual benefit of allowing the youth to experience “real” India as well as ensuring proper monitoring and implementation of rural programmes.

Sixth, the role of the Indian youth in ensuring sustainable development will be of crucial importance. The reason is simple. The youth have the most at stake in the future. The biggest beneficiaries of a green and pollution free India will be the youth. Therefore, the youth ought to be at the forefront to take forward the agenda of eco-friendly development. The same holds true for inclusive growth. If the present economic policies are ignoring the poor and marginalized, it will be the youth who will bear the brunt of the lopsided economic policies in the future.

Seventh, the Indian youth should also take an active part in women empowerment, especially in the present scenario where the sex ratio is declining and the cases of female foeticide are rising at alarming rate. There can be no future without women. Again, the youth will have to create awareness and an ambience where ill treatment of women becomes unthinkable. Here too, the Indian youth can lead by example.

Eight, the Indian youth in their zeal to reform India should not forget that the elders are integral part of society and a rich reservoir of knowledge. Their role and contribution cannot be ignored. Furthermore, they are not our adversaries but our allies in the noble cause of developing India. Therefore, the youth ought to cooperate with them as much as possible.

Ninth, the Indian youth is not a homogenous entity. Every young person has multiple identities, many of which overlap but the primary identity of the Indian youth should be of an Indian. Only when the youth identify themselves as Indians and making all other identities subservient to this one, will we witness the true rise of India’s youth energy and the consequent rise of India.

In conclusion, the Indian youth not only have the power and potential to bring about dynamic reforms in Indian society but will certainly translate their power and potential into concrete action because as Benjamin Disraeli rightly remarked: “Almost everything that is great has been done by youth.”

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Anurag Dutta

Tapping India's Youth Potential: The Grassroutes Movement

I spent the first eighteen years of my life in Tura, a little hilly town nestled in the rainforests of Northeast India. Northeast India is marginalized culturally and geopolitically and I was led to believe that belonging to Northeast India is a disadvantage that would always relegate me a few steps behind mainstream India. As an adolescent, I became very conscious of my non-tribal identity and the fact that I could not take safety for granted in a place rife with ethnic violence, targeted mostly against non-tribals. Growing up here, in the only home I knew, I was always only a partial insider. The boundaries between insurgent organizations, tribal students' organizations, political organizations were often blurred, as is the case in most parts of Northeast India. Given this state of affairs, I developed an acute resentment against and the need to detach myself from any of these constituencies. I felt a sense of shame for my generation that lacked any purpose or connection, as if we were the middle children of history, suspended in void with no hope for democracy and development.

The year 2006 changed it all. With a tinge of guilt around having just followed a herd of Indian students, who fed off the hype created around the hallowed field of engineering, I stepped into BITS Pilani. Things were never quite the same again. I discovered sites of potential and possibility where I thought none existed. The learning curve in the course of my two and a half years at BITS Pilani has been a steep one. In many ways BITS Pilani, the institution, infrastructure and people were a far cry from my Northeast home. The disparate conditions along with interactions with young minds from all over the country provided me with

significant insights into structural inequities; the quintessential American dream that we were socialized to pursue was ruptured. Individual ability is not enough to sustain someone across the deep-seated, invisible history of social and economic disparities. As youth who are currently undergraduates in different fields, we were a handful of the privileged among the billion something population of India. It was a humbling experience to realize the infinite 'unsuccessful' stories that remain behind the facade of the few 'success' stories. We thus owe it to society to utilize our privilege for some sort of social transformation, to make a difference.

Over the course of my time at BITS Pilani, I met people whose views resonated with mine, reverberating with the compelling need to 'do something'. Over countless cups of chai, our conversations often extended into the wee hours of the morning drifting across a spectrum of issues ranging from technology and business to politics and environment. In one of these sessions, just after we had watched a film based on the life of Che Guevara, in an inspired moment, we hit upon the idea of journeying through across the country as means of rousing privileged youth like me from our complacent, individualist consumerism. And so began our own little movement; we called our group the Youth Factor (YoFa) and christened our road trip movement Grassroutes (www.grassroutes.in).

The objective of this movement was to facilitate a process that intimately engages Indian youth with the problems at the grassroots level through the medium of a road trip; and in the process uncover, relate to, navigate and document first hand,

life experiences and issues affecting people. Following the trip, the participants will act as social ambassadors for the specific cause/issues they were involved in and eventually serve as advocates for the same. They will also serve as liaison between stakeholders across different levels. The idea is to inspire a process of community and knowledge building, a process where we learn together the local history of struggle and develop a shared critical perspective around it. We (youth) realize that as a constituency, we need to reposition ourselves as architects of critical social inquiry and social transformation; we need to contest hierarchies and democratize structures and create new spaces rather than trying to squeeze ourselves into existing spaces; and in these ways contribute to local, national and global debates around issues of concern.

As the first edition of Grassroutes takes off this winter, three teams will travel to three different places- Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. As one of participants involved in initiating this movement, I will be a part of the first journey. I will join the team to Tamil Nadu where we will investigate the life conditions of local tribal communities in the wake of the recently passed Forest Rights Act. A multi crore Neutrino Lab is being constructed inside the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, an act which could have a deep reaching environmental impact. The actual field trip will be preceded by a brief, intense period of preparation where the Grassroutes team will help the groups acquaint themselves with the specific local political, social, cultural and environmental issues. This phase is aimed at helping fellows acquire some knowledge of the situation and equipping them with methodological tools to delve deep into the community, assess the issues and work towards social problem solving in collaboration with the local community.

This, then is our way of tapping into the great potential of India's youth. We are inevitably a hybrid generation with diverse technologies at our disposal to publicize a cause, to create the desired awareness and garner resources for intervention. The movement is about utilizing the vast dashboard of social media tools that the emergence of Web 2.0 has put in our hands for social and environmental issues, issues that really matter instead of just networking. And as our movement snowballs into something bigger, we hope to create socially aware youth who will not lose themselves in the tidal wave of consumerism and instead engage in a self conscious process of envisioning where we are headed, as a people. I am

more and more convinced that while upholding this spirit in our individual lives is important, of even more critical significance is to network and collaborate with like-minded youth driven by a need to intervene in social injustice. Part of my agenda is to work to create such a critical mass so as to achieve credibility and legitimacy as stakeholders.

I recognize though, that networking and creating social awareness is only the beginning of taking our political and social responsibilities seriously. Today, an average youth with the most impeccable credentials shies away from politics because it is considered to be a dirty word. Three months back, along with a few friends, I started an attempt to change this perception in our immediate environment, the college. The general assumption is that politics, even student politics is not something that an honest individual can get into because of numerous enormous entry barriers set up over time by successive students unions. We wanted our fellow students to view politics from an alternative perspective, to demonstrate to the average college goer that an honest candidate can contest an election, fight clean, still win and then contest redundant practices and initiate democratic changes within the institutional context. The battle was more fraught than we had anticipated. In terms of outcome, our candidate could not make it. However, we certainly did not fail. As the haze of the election battles faded, we found that our attempt had inspired many students to be vocal about corrupt practices and to stop avoiding politics. To an extent the actual outcome of the elections was immaterial as we found ourselves lending voice to many student concerns. This experience combined with my growing knowledge of resistance movements on local and small scale reinforce my conviction that as participants of Grassroutes, as youth we can act as catalysts for change and binders for these smaller movements, helping to catapult them strategically towards structural change.

“...as youth we can act as catalysts for change and binders for these smaller movements, helping to catapult them strategically towards structural change.”

As I worked towards actualizing Grassroutes with my other team members, I also got involved with other community-based initiatives for social change. I spent last summer interning at an organization called the Grassroots Development Laboratory, which aims at finding scalable local solutions to national problems. I learned that one of the most effective ways to bring about social and economic change is through socially motivated businesses in the context of the task that was assigned to me, that of creating and running a sports rehabilitation camp for poor, young males labelled as 'anti-socials'. After encountering numerous obstacles while trying to ensure sustainability of the camp, I finally found the solution in a business model, where families pay a token amount for entry to the camp and the camp director draws his salary from this amount. In eliminating the charity factor from the whole equation, this model led to greater community ownership of the camp. Eventually, the camp began to run successfully without any outside support, completely self governed by the village.

“The task before us is daunting at the same time as it is challenging and exciting. I feel empowered as part of this collective, confident in my essential identity as an Indian youth.”

In the course of my engagement with YoFa, the Grassroots Development Laboratory and the Rotaract Club of BITS Pilani, I have come to believe that social entrepreneurship is the need of the hour. As part of the Grassroutes team, I hope to provide a platform for our fellows and their acquaintances (Indian youth from diverse social-economic-cultural backgrounds) to facilitate social entrepreneurship by providing legal support, business plan advice, financial advice, seed funding opportunities and mentoring. In this way we open up opportunities and possibilities for youth who have relatively less access to multiple resources than we are; we capitalize on the multiple resources at our disposal.

So here I am, at the threshold of my quest as a social journalist and change facilitator. Along with 16 other young Indians, I am among the first to join 'Grassroutes' in its maiden endeavour; to reconnect to and interrogate social structural and environmental problems that plague our country; and to initiate collective envisioning process geared towards social transformation at local, regional and national levels. This will begin with a ten-day bike journey during which I will travel wind in my face and a lot of conversations with the folks who are at the very roots of these problems. Our objective is to document these problems and the radical work that change makers are doing at these flash points, and try and catalyse the resolution of these problems. The movement really begins after the trip. Armed with our documentaries, we will begin a very aggressive campaign in showing the world what's going wrong in these places, procuring resources that the change makers may be in dire need of, and spreading the word about how, like us, young Indians can join the movement and create a meaningful impact in our society.

The task before us is daunting at the same time as it is challenging and exciting. I feel empowered as part of this collective, confident in my essential identity as an Indian youth. It is time to reclaim our social responsibility as youth and to nurture hope, bridging social, economic, religious and communal boundaries.

Anurag Dutta
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Apoorv Parag Tripathi



India's Youth Energy - Power and Potential - Your Vision

'The future truly belongs to those who fuse intelligence with faith, and who with courage and determination forge their way forward from chance to choice, from blind adaptation to creative evolution.'

I am the part of that pulsating army of young Indians who are wanting and are waiting eagerly to make a difference in India. India is a young country with a civilisation worth a millennium, yet she is vibrant, yet she is young at heart and yet she is ever progressing. While in her resides a population valuing a billion, what accurately manifests her aspirations for the future is her very effervescent and strong youth force. This force is enthusiastic with its dreams; its voice is booming with a million ideas, they have found a tenacious spirit in themselves, an assertive resolve in front of a million challenges and they are feisty in bringing their visions to life.

This is the novel India, this is India Now..... As a young Indian brought up in the era of complete liberalisation of not only our economy, of our society and of our lives but also of our outlook and values, I have a new meaning for India. In the 21st century, India is no longer only the land of immense diversity but it is now the land of incalculable opportunities. As the Asian giant spearheading the cause of Asia with its reluctant partner China, I am a part of a consensus, which declares that India has arrived. It explains the possible authenticity of our dreams for our country and us.

For me India now stands for the renewed commitment towards making itself someone whose name tag spells the title of 'Has Become' rather than being the erstwhile 'Could Have Been'. In its new avatar, she is confidence personified. When she speaks, people listen, when she arrives people notice, and her presence is marked not by a mere chuckle or a reluctant nod of acknowledgement but by a keen ear of understanding and a quiet yet perceivable admiration. Indeed India in the 21st century has truly arrived as the world's future and also ours. This for me is India Now.

It is often remarked and believed that the very temperament of a country translates a lot to what the people stand for. India is a gentle giant believing in the fact that we can bring about a change in ourselves, to our very surroundings and to the greater part of the world thorough calm measures. After all in her has resided the greatest soul who walked on Mother Earth- Gandhi who exhibited an unruffled resolve while bringing a landmark change beyond ordinary thought. In similar measures, my vision of the youth relies on gentle forces of the mind over muscles, of bravery of the heart and the art of influencing through the window of words for if words are to be truly believed then nothing is as gentle as true strength and nothing is as strong as true gentleness.

As India's core population consists of the youth under the age of thirty-five, my vision for my fellow youth also stands as my vision for India. What I envision is not only for the youth but for the entire country because what I believe,

“Our potential is in the fact that we dream big, that our goals transcend the reality at hand by several leagues and that we give due significance to our value system in all our actions.”

what I imagine and what I wish to achieve will be achieved primarily by me and my fellow Indians for the country and not only for ourselves.

India's youth is dominant in its thoughts, we are educated among those who are educated and we stand along side the experienced in fulfilling our duties to the best of our abilities. Our potential is in the fact that we dream big, that our goals transcend the reality at hand by several leagues and that we give due significance to our value system in all our actions. Our potential lies in thinking unconventionally and our power lies in making these unconventional thoughts a convention in modern times.

My vision for the youth is that of being committed Lawmakers. It is law, which governs us; it gives us an effective foundation and an honourable upbringing. A purposeful execution of the Law of the land will put our country firmly in the path towards planned success. The true essence of a success in a thriving country lies in its Laws and thus this sphere gains importance in my opinion.

India is a country, which has had a continuous abhorrence for politicians (who happen to be our elected lawmakers) but a sustained affection towards politics, with concerns of how the country is run and how it must be run. We, the people of India indulge in politics as a daily routine. This kind of politics is far from the grimly games played in the capital of our country or the different political hubs spread across the length and breath of our landscape. We indulge in the politics of ideas and of exchange of views with complete interest for the good of the country. Thus, we need to bring about a change in tone towards our politicians so that people can not only voice their opinions and choices in conjunction with their elected representatives but also be one with their elected representatives for the well-being of our country.

In a state of affairs as this, it is time we revolutionise this perception of lawmakers. In our form of affirmative actions let us bring about a class of common Indians, who are young, educated with not only an array of degrees but with values to sustain their characters, made with ingredients of self and not given a cushion to succeed from adolescent along with a secular outlook to form our ruling clan. Let them not be referred as Politicians for the name has been sullied in excess of the past sixty-two years over and over. Let them be known strictly as Law Makers and nothing else as their job is to make laws and aid in their execution. They are not to indulge in any other business of no concern to them.

The politicians are elected to make laws, to bring in accountability in the system and to deliver on the broad-spectrum assurance of peace and efficiency in our daily lives. For a change of such depths a set of very severe qualifications need to be set before we can be sure to elect a representative for ourselves in any level of the government. The running of a country is an occupation and only the best need to be employed for the same. Thus, a methodical screening of potential candidates must be achieved and proper standards set for the same.

Why should Lawmakers be any different from the bureaucrats who have to undergo a series of highly competitive tests and training before they become part of India's highly established network of administrators? Why should there be discrimination between the qualifications between these two categories of administrators when the end goal of both is the smooth running of the country? After all, the people deserve the best candidates to run the administration of the country from the highest offices.

Constitutional changes must be brought about to see such standards are stringently met. Each Law Maker must hold a post-graduate degree with special emphasis on training in the matters of governance. They must be made to undergo training for a period of two years. This will help them to understand the ways of running a government, how to be perceptive towards the dynamics of making laws, appreciating the emotions of the people who elect them, executing laws made by them, being adept at the art of accountability and inculcating ethics of heading a citizen service office. In ancient times a king or an emperor had to undergo such training before heading the kingdom. Why should it be any different here?

They must also undergo a thorough check on their backgrounds so as to bring out hidden baggage of malice, corruption, ill-tempered actions against the society and luxury enjoyed in any form of crime.

As we have seen time and again that every profession does have rejects to positions on offer for candidacy, similarly we need to have a system where we can reject potential applicants for the position of Law Makers. I propose to make the Central Bureau of Investigation in-charge of making completely independent background checks on potential candidates so as to convince the citizen of the authenticity of the candidate's qualification. The Judiciary under the leadership of the Supreme Court must establish a body, which can look into the matter of conviction of such candidates into citizen service. On being certified as a purposeful and potential Lawmaker, the candidate can then choose his or her affiliation in terms of political party and begin his or her career.

In addition to the above, I also firmly suggest a retirement age for such Lawmakers. Every profession has a passage where the wall of no further progress is met. As running the governance of the country is a job, the Lawmakers must be acquainted with a retirement age. This will facilitate the smooth transition of power from the old and experienced to the new and enthusiastic. As Lord Acton appropriately summed it up as power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely the power must be shared in appropriate gauge with both the citizen and the elected Lawmakers as to make an equitable division of responsibility and privileges.

In matters of party politics, I suggest a firm move to establish a two party system in India. The malice of multiple party rule has become a plague we must remove. I understand the various demands of multiple sections of the citizen but I wish to know how can we ever bring the whole of India as an entity and solve her problems as a whole if we, the people divide themselves in form of their cultural beliefs? If our foundations are weak and we prolong its weakness then the structure

“My vision for the youth is to take responsibility for our country and for the progress, which we will make in the next few decades. The leadership is soon going to fall on our shoulders and we must be absolutely prepared to take on the duty.”

of a sound political structure cannot be achieved.

I also understand that the two party system has its defects which are well established in countries like U.S.A. and U.K. but the fact that the two party system leads to a very controlled line of thought process and deliberation on the essential matters of governance is a good enough reason to implement the same. The truth

that two party system will bring all the Lawmakers on a compromise with regards to policies and give the people a simple choice to make when elections arrive gives the two party system an upper hand in this scenario.

My vision for the youth is to take responsibility for our country and for the progress, which we will make in the next few decades. The leadership is soon going to fall on our shoulders and we must be absolutely prepared to take on the duty. With growing concerns over security issues on our borders and the insecure future of our secular values, we must take liability of leading our country. We must stand shoulder to shoulder with each other and provide every citizen the platform to voice their opinions and choices, allow them to attempt to prove themselves and contribute effectively to nation building, and look beyond the boundaries created by man. We must break barriers of caste, colour, creed, sex and those of nationality in the process.

What will bring a true difference to our country is the daily grind, which we must never abdicate. This will allow us to get the edge and fulfill our vision. When we make a commitment towards a dream, it implies that we must owe up to the responsibility for the same. We must not let mistakes of the past mar our future. It is the enthusiasm that marks us, the youth, from the rest and we must never let go of it. Enthusiasm in a dream thus is not an accessory but an absolute necessity.

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Devangana Kalita

India's Youth Energy - Power and Potential - My Vision

"As a young citizen of India, armed with technology, knowledge and love for my nation, I realize, small aim is a crime.

I will work and sweat for a great vision, the vision of transforming India into a developed nation, powered by economic strength with value system.

I am one of the citizens of a billion; Only the vision will ignite the billion souls. It has entered into me;

The ignited soul compared to any resource is the most powerful resource on the earth, above the earth under the earth.

I will keep the lamp of knowledge burning to achieve the vision - Developed India.

If we work and sweat for the great vision with ignited minds, the transformation leading to birth of vibrant developed India will happen.

This song, when sung in our own beautiful languages will unite our minds for action."

The best articulator and visionary of the Power and Potential of India's Youth Energy in the most recent past, the Hon'ble ex-President of India, Dr. Abdul Kalam lays out a wonderful plan and dream to propel Young India to its full potential in his "**Song of India**". With around 42% of its demography being composed of young people, India has one of the largest youth populations in the world and it is the Youth who compose the most important and valuable assets of the country and shall eventually determine the direction that the country takes in future. In the essay that follows, I shall analyze what a dynamic concept like India's Youth Energy is actually significant of and how there needs to be a change in the way we perceive this energy; what does being an "ignited soul" essentially means. From hereon, I shall go on to elaborate on my vision for direction of this great Youth energy – envisioned and articulated on the basis of an understanding and perspective gained throughout my own humble experience as a young student of this nation.

What is "India's Youth Energy"? The most likely answer would be "Our biggest and largest 'resource', which needs to be well skilled and trained to meet the challenges of this 'competitive' world!!" This is where we go wrong in our approach when we the young population are regarded as "resources" that needs to "profitably" harnessed, an idea not surprising to encounter, having its roots in the capitalist world that we live in today which has transformed all human potentials, its development and aspirations to their mere material worth. What has the efforts to gainfully exploit this vast human resource led to?? Schools and

colleges turning into warehouses for manufacturing “obedient machines” for the capitalist market, wherein everyone is involved in a rat race to win and reach an illusive and mistaken goal, where there is no space for alternative innovative thinking or outlook? Developed India is what we dream of and aspire for, is this how we plan to work towards developed India? Where are the researchers and scientists for making new innovations to uplift the socio-economic conditions of the masses going to come from when increasingly the best research and technology institutes in our country are selling their so called “best brains of the country” to the MNCs? Where is our inspiration and sense of community and socio-political responsibility? How will the great vision be fulfilled when the youth is continuously becoming immune to the social and political evils around us and getting more and more absorbed into the our own cocoon of “my life, my career and competition”, when the only time we raise our voice is when we have to give away “our seats” to the Other Backward Classes? Then again, while one part of the privileged youth population is evolving into a desensitized and depoliticized mechanized entity without a voice that can act as a pressure group in this ‘great’ democracy, we have another half, rather more than half of the youth population who continue to live in poverty and illiteracy in our rurals for whom the only means of escape and hope is distress migration to the urbans where they are most often target to exploitation. This is while again half of the youth population, the young female race, in spite of considerable progress, still continues to reel under the pressures of a patriarchal oppressive cultural system. I understand that this is a very pessimistic picture to portray in the beginning of an essay, however, while we applaud the power the potential of the Youth Force of India, we have to look back and critically analyze where we actually stand and how we need to re-evaluate and re-conceptualize our perspectives. I certainly do not believe that there is no hope, we see rays of hope everywhere where the young are breaking away from the ‘mainstream’ (so to say!) and leading movements in various parts of the country and serving as beacon lights for the rest of the generation. I am a strong believer in the strength of this Energy, if inspired and motivated in a socially conscious manner and not just by individualistic goals justified by a misconception of contributing to the larger goal of “Developed” India.

Being a Believer, I do nurture a Vision for the Youth of India, a Vision based on the premise that We are Force, a Force prized not only for its “resource” value

needed for the economic upliftment of the country, but a Force which is capable of bringing in a radical change in the country in its progress towards a “Developed Nation”. My vision largely encompasses three prime themes

1. **The evolution of the Entire Youth Power as a politically and socially conscious Force which can act as a precursor, a pressure group and as well as a watch dog of democratic processes in the country and make a significant contribution to socio-economic and positive change and development in the country**
2. **Inspiring and motivating the Rural Youth Force into maintaining sustainable forms of living and livelihood inherent in village life within their own cultural communities and regions and not hanker after a Westernized notion of Development.**
3. **To evolve mechanisms within our society and education systems to make young women aware of the patriarchal ideology so often internalized in them to be able to build a Gender sensitive Youth Force and aware of the ills against women and willing to fight against it.**
4. **To build a space for the easy development of alternative ideas and careers among the youth**

The Vision articulated above is undoubtedly a very mammoth task and I might be even accused of excessive positivism, but here lies my faith in the Power and Potential of India’s Youth Energy, Our Fresh Energy whose collective imagination has still not been so thoroughly internalized by the dominant capitalist

“Being a Believer, I do nurture a Vision for the Youth of India, a Vision based on the premise that We are Force, a Force prized not only for its “resource” value needed for the economic upliftment of the country...”

ideology of our times that a whole universe of political alternatives have become eclipsed by its monstrous shadows.

Before I proceed any further, I would like to dwell into the question of why I have chosen these themes as the crux of my vision. Throughout my high school and college life I have observed how slowly the youth are becoming impervious to the issues around us, how we would rather sit in the canteen instead of attending a March for the Bhopal Gas Victims, how we are ready to rather pay Rs.500 as fine instead of completing just 120hrs of compulsory social service over a period of 3 years under NSS as part of the graduation requirements. Being a Union member of the college Students' Union this year I have also gained a first hand experience of the difficulties involved in initiating such a discourse into the purely academically driven consciousness of the college space and have also been in confrontation with a completely misdirected political leadership of the Delhi University Students' Union. This has propelled me towards articulation of the first clause of the vision to give a "real" voice to India's Youth. Secondly, a 2 month rural internship this summer and personal experience in my dad's village has made me realize that very often we fail to identify the richness of our rural sustainable lifestyles which are the way forward in today's world of global warming and climate change, and instead of promoting a trend of forcing external Westernized notions of development, we need to assist the Rural Youth to participatorily evolve their own system of life. Lastly, as a young woman studying in one of the leading feminist institutions of the country and having personally experienced what it takes to break stereotypes associated with femininity and the female gender, I strongly believe that in order to realize the full potential of India's Youth Energy, the female section of this Energy needs to be able to resist and break patriarchal structures.

In the foregoing paragraphs, I shall outline certain broad ideas for moving forward towards this direction of change, which are definitely just initiators and undoubtedly they need to be built and refined a lot which would probably require an in depth understanding which my young mind has still probably not acquired.

1. The evolution of the Entire Youth Power as a politically and socially conscious Force

- I. There is a need to include a discourse of political and social consciousness in our urban education system in terms of 'actual active' involvement with issues so that it churns out aware individuals and not merely automatized minds for a rat-race. If each college would take up the progress one village or even one small social issue in their locality under its purview, we could go a long way. Compulsory rural internships or urban internship involving engagement with social issues across all courses and disciplines in universities can contribute towards sensitizing and motivating the Youth.
- II. We have to work towards evolving a more responsible and rightly inspired student leadership to be able to rejuvenate the youth as a political force and voice in the country as it was during the days of the 70s, which would essentially mean more effective means of selection of student leaders as the Lyndoh Commission Guidelines has shown (though in a preliminary way) for DUSU and stricter measures to check the violence and gross corruption of currently existing student political bodies. Also there needs to be a re-evaluation of education policies across universities in the country such as compulsory attendance that prevent students from actively participating towards building a 'constructive' political space. Such basic restructuring of the stake-holding systems in this change process can help in forming a mechanism that allows honest and motivated young citizens to enter this field.
- III. Also we need to look at leadership modules beyond the educational space, to build mechanisms for their flourishing. For instance, one good example being the NGO Pravah in Delhi that works towards youth mobilization. Again for instance, some of my friends and me are planning to start a campaign in the university space called "Chillar: the Change is in your pocket" to address issues in campus related to society, gender and environment, but we are facing immense problems in terms of fund-raising and organization. We need to have mechanisms in place from the government and other organizations which encourages such initiatives from the Youth and makes the whole red tape process easier. Programs like "Teach India Professional and Gandhi Fellowship (a 2 year fellowship of Rs.14,000/- a month to act as facilitator to principals in rural schools spread over 8 villages) or for that

matter, the Habitat Young Visionary Award have to conceptualized and brought out more and in a larger scale.

- IV. Efficient Youth Leadership can help in building a voice against various issues from Development at the cost of Displacement of thousands of populations to Literacy Movements, to a voice against terrorism or state sponsored violence (Salwa Judum, Binayek Sen, AFSPA, the genocide by the Gujarat Government, fundamentalist ideology), anti-people policies and repression of democratic rights. When 42% of the population of India becomes a collective voice, it will indeed be a powerful force and a pressure that cannot be negated. However again, for the voice to be directed for the cause of the right issues and in the right perspective and not in the line fundamentalist or destructive ideology, the youth will have to work towards a right leadership that no doubt takes in account rationalist differences of opinion

To look at this vision from a currently burning problem, when such a perspective becomes a mass youth movement, it can help in attacking many of the social injustices that plague the Indian Society which would essentially tackle the root of the cause that gives birth to home-grown terrorists, where we see a misdirection of India's immense Youth Energy and where also we see its power, but for a greatly destructive purpose.

2. Inspiring and motivating the Rural Youth Force into maintaining sustainable forms of living and livelihood inherent in village life within their own cultural communities and regions and not hanker after a Westernized notion of Development

- I. There is a need to make mechanisms like Youth Panchayats or Young Citizen Forums with certain execution powers in the villages to engage the youth more actively in the development process so that they have a platform to use their creativity and potential. This also becomes a highly participatory tool for the development of their potential.

- II. Setting up of extensive Youth Resource Centers in the villages which can serve as hubs for the flourishing of ideas for improving qualities of life in the village through indigenous processes which are a right balance of sustainable lifestyle of the community and Westernized notions of connectivity and modernization and wherein the skills and motivation required for the same can also be provided. I would like to however point out that this in anyway would not mean rejecting useful scientific means but would imply using science to build something suitable to rural lifestyle and not build something and then try and impose it.

- III. However, for the rural youth to proceed in this direction and be able lead a satisfied life within their village, and to stop distress migration into cities, the village as a unit too needs has to be self-sufficient having good connectivity and efficient health facilities, certain basic technologies and access to media and most importantly, an education system sensitive to the needs and priorities of the rural Youth population so as to prevent a sense of frustration and adversity amongst the youth

The fulfillment of this aspect of the vision for India's Rural Youth is indeed a complex process of change involving many stake holders from the village youth to the government at the top.

3. To evolve a gender sensitive Youth Force

- I. Once again, we need to work towards an education system that does not reinforce the gender stereotypes but challenges or at least questions them.
- II. Some of us, as young conscious women especially having the privilege of studying in institutes that look as these questions and also actively engages in them, have to make the rest of population aware of these systems of control and subjugation through the media, initiating discussions and taking up issues in our daily life itself in terms of policing of dress codes and imposition of deadlines in girls' hostels by educational institutes and issues like eve-teasing to which we have become impervious day by day.

III. Also evolving a Youth Women Force sensitive to their gender is not enough, the vision is of a gender sensitive Youth Power, irrespective of male or female, which collectively challenges ingrained cultural patriarchal structures so that we do not lose young women of great potential to heinous crimes such as abuse and rape or be one of the countries to have the highest young women rural maternal mortality rate due to negligence and lack of care and facilities or have less than 20% of working women in the organized sector.

In the demographic analysis, the standing of the young women is still very poor in comparison to men be it education, health or employment, and thereby I believe that a vision for India's Youth Energy needs to keep this in perspective.

4. To build a space for the easy development of alternative ideas and careers among the youth

The simplest way to gauge this aspect of the vision would be "Why India being a nation of a billion performs so poorly in the Olympics?" In an excessively academically driven society and a attitude that only looks for fat bucks; under a government attitude that also does little to provide platforms for the growth of new alternative initiatives and careers like sports, arts, research etc the potential a large chunk of our Youth Population has been neglected. We have to evolve an atmosphere where the hopes, aspirations and special needs of very young citizen of India is appreciated and possible of being fulfilled. Even this obviously is linked with diverse economic and social forces.

It is also imperative to understand that this Vision is not an extremist vision, wherein in I am saying that students should throw themselves into political movements and embrace social service as their goal in life forgetting their studies and that the rural youth should never explore boundaries beyond their village, but that we need strike a balance and have to rectify certain areas where we might have gone wrong in the past in our vision for India's Youth Energy. Also I would like to stress on the fact that fulfillment of this Vision obviously would also simultaneously need progress

of the socio-economic processes like improvement in education systems, equal access to education and other opportunities for all youth, better employment opportunities, rise of youth social entrepreneurship initiatives etc.

Finally, I would like to conclude saying that this Vision for India's Youth Energy: Its Power and Potential is definitely not all-encompassing and its realization is definitely going to be a very gradual, complex and inter-subjective process involving relentless concentrated efforts, but is something very close to my heart and something with which I have been and will continue to constantly engage with because as I have stated time and again in this essay, India's Youth Force is an unimaginably mammoth human power, capable of bringing in a radical change not just in India but the world as a whole.

"India's Youth Force is an unimaginably mammoth human power, capable of bringing in a radical change not just in India but the world as a whole."

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Ipshita Ghosh



The Indian Youth for the Aged

In the 21st century, when India stands poised as a superpower, one of its greatest strengths is its large youth population which continues to define the nation's image economically and culturally. In terms of sheer manpower, the Indian youth is a great asset. There are innumerable ways in which their collective energies can be directed for the country's benefit. My dream, however, is to utilize the Indian youth power in order to improve the lives of its aged. The welfare role of the Indian state is inadequate to provide a steady feeling of well being to its elderly citizens. In many developed nations, social security takes care of financial needs of old people, widows, war survivors, etc. However, the system I propose to set in place does not emphasize on the financial aspect, at least not directly. Financial security, though crucial, is only one aspect of any programme that seeks to improve the lives of the aged. This model aims to provide emotional and physical security, which are essential for a good life.

The lives of the Indian masses have changed considerably especially in cities over the last decade. With the growth of nuclear families, we often come across an elderly couple or even a single old person living alone. Their relations are far, sometimes abroad, they have little interaction with the rest of the neighbourhood and become easy victims of murders, thefts and robberies. In any case, they are inevitably isolated at an emotional level and often lose the will to live. In "Social Adjustment in Old Age", S. Misra states that: "the technological breakthrough due to industrialization, westernization, and urbanization has neglected the ascribed statuses by weakening the unity and integrity of the joint family and caste groups leading to the negligence of the role and status of the elderly persons. Moreover, the emergence of achieved properties like wealth, education etc., in

distorted forms, has colonized the state of mind of the youth who are adopting the individualistic value of the West". We also regularly hear of cases when an elderly parent is unceremoniously dumped into the old age home, if not out on the streets. Old age homes may fulfill their basic needs but are unable to overcome the problem of emotional isolation. Last year as a volunteer of the National Social Service, I worked at a government-run old-age home and met many elderly people who had been practically abandoned by their families. Bitter and cynical, they appeared to have lost all hope for themselves. No one deserves such loneliness, least of all the aged members of the society, who are supposed to be respected in all our traditions. Moreover, increased life expectancy and a simultaneous shift in the values of urban India means that there are more old people, alone and in need of help. A report produced by the Population Research Centre of Baroda has noted the increase in population of the aged people. Between 1901 and 1951, the proportion of population over the age of 60 grew from 5 % to 5.4%. However, 2001 this had increased to 7%. The report further states that: "When changes in the decadal growth rate in the general population are compared with those for the elderly population, it is noted that the latter grew at a relatively much faster rate than the general population, since 1951. Furthermore, the decadal percent increase in the elderly population for the period 2001-2011 is likely to be more than double the rate of increase of the general population. The size of the elderly rose in absolute terms during the last century from 12 million in 1901 to approximately 71 million in 2001 and is likely to reach 113 million in 2016." Therefore, it is quite obvious that the issue is an urgent one since the elderly population in India is growing at a very fast pace. It is only fair that the youth of the country should fulfill their potential by being a part of a process which ensures

the re-integration of the elderly into the society. My experiences at the old age home and from what I have come across otherwise, has led me to feel that at such a time, what the aged need is companionship, emotional security and a strong sense of being loved and looked after. This model of care for the aged, with special focus on urban areas, provides exactly that.

“Why is the youth the most ideal choice for being members of such a programme? Students often not just have the time but also the willingness and zeal to undertake this kind of activity.”

For any group activity to succeed, the organization is important. This programme is neighbourhood - based and open to the youth and in fact anyone who has the compassion, the time and the vigilance to undertake such an important and difficult activity. I call it difficult as it is convenient to do distant social service, to pay some money each month to a charity. To create a personal bond requires a much greater commitment. The basis of this program is the creation of such bonds with and among the elderly, something they need most crucially.

Why is the youth the most ideal choice for being members of such a programme? Students often not just have the time but also the willingness and zeal to undertake this kind of activity. It won't suit everybody and so it is a must that only those who are really interested should be apart of the programme. To have apathetic people going and interacting with the elderly can only be counterproductive. However, for those who are in it to bring about change, for real, this programme offers as much to the youth as it does to the aged. The interaction between the old and the young is perhaps this programme's biggest aim and greatest necessity. Therefore, while visiting old people, the communication should not be limited to a formal exchange. The aim is to make the people we are visiting open up to us and make us a part of their lives, even if it takes quite a while to do so. Moreover, dispelling social and emotional isolation being the goal of the programme, there

should be an emphasis on community activities to encourage communication, not just between the old and the young but also between elderly people themselves. Therefore, apart from regular home visits, the members could arrange picnics in nearby gardens or maybe just a walk together where people can meet up. Ultimately, the programme should create a network of the old and the young, a network based on mutual love, care, dependence and trust. For the youth involved in the programme, this should be a process of sensitization like no other. We have all heard of the problems of the aged, but to view them ourselves and moreover, be a part of the system to ease them would be a wholly different experience. Perhaps it would also be a necessary indicator of the need of a loving family in our lives, however technically advanced our societies are. Moreover, it can also be a startling example of how concerned citizens can in fact replace indifferent families in what seems to be a disintegrating society. The replacement may not be an absolute one but with time and effort, the youth of India can make it a very substantial one.

Making this system neighbourhood-based means leaving everything to the residents of the area as to how they would like to organize the model. As mentioned before, anyone who cares and has the time can be a part of it. It requires no funding and only a very basic structure. For instance, let us assume that a particular neighbourhood has 15 young people who wish to be a part of the programme and there are 20 old people (including elderly couples). The volunteers can divide themselves into groups of 3 members. The basis of this group formation should be a similarity in the timings when they are free. Since there are will be 5 such groups in this area, each can take up the responsibility of 4 elderly people by visiting them regularly, at least twice every day. Moreover, it should not be only one group visiting one person. The groups should be intermingled, especially on weekends and different people should group together and visit more people.

Apart from prevention of social and emotional isolation, this programme also addresses an urgent issue of the physical safety of the elderly people. Most Resident Welfare Associations do ensure that the police come and check up on the old people regularly. The volunteers of this programme too must develop a healthy relationship with the neighbourhood police station and help them in their task. While it may not be possible for the volunteers to go out at night

“At the same time, through this practical, communication-based model the youth power can be directed at a worthy cause which not just brightens the lives of the aged but provides a rare platform to bring together the old and the young.”

and personally make sure that doors are locked and windows bolted, it should not be too much of an effort to call them up with a reminder. This is the personal touch that the police lack and it is this that should be most effective. Moreover, the members of this programme should be keen enough to sense if anyone is suffering from a severe problem, be it physical or psychological. In that case, it is important that the experts come in before it is too late. Thus, the volunteers of this neighbourhood based care system for the aged must be aware of the various NGOs and other bodies which work in the field of old – age problems. They must have contact with these agencies

and should not hesitate before calling them in, if they feel someone requires expert help.

This programme is designed for the youth and the aged of the urban areas where the problem of breakdown of family roots is much more urgent. However, it may be noted that a similar model may apply to semi-urban or rural areas as well. Also, the issues involved may be much more severe. A large section of the elderly population lives below the poverty line and have no way of supporting themselves. These are cases where state intervention or help from established NGOs is absolutely necessary.

However, for the growing elderly population in Indian cities who may have the money but not the will to live any longer; who may have led a fulfilling life but are abandoned at the age when they are vulnerable; who are in need of hope and company, this care-system for the elderly run by the youth would be an attempt to improve many lives. At the same time, through this practical, communication-based model the youth power can be directed at a worthy cause which not just brightens the lives of the aged but provides a rare platform to bring together the old and the young.

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India's Youth Energy - Power and Potential - Your Vision

On reading the words 'India's youth' I sat pondering over the vast population of the nation, over 40% that it addresses. The youth, the generation next, the people within the age group of 16 to 35 years, and it brought a smile to my face. India's youth energy, its power and potential, is not only a topic of discussion here at home but even at the international level.

Back home in the country I quote, Sameer Gehlaut, Chairman, India Bulls Financial Services "India is full of energy and at the forefront leading this energy drive is the youth of India that constitutes over 40% of India's population. Perhaps for the first time since Independence, we are at a stage where the youth of the country is poised at the cusp of a quantum change in leadership across all domains, be it political, business, or social. Never before has the opportunity (and also the challenge) for the youth of this country to make a tangible difference to the society been as profound as now."

This is not merely a statement but clear indication of the vast pool of talent, potential and drive that the youth of India posses. Its all around us, in the suave young business tycoons, amongst the daring media personalities, amongst the many

"We all have defined visions to achieve. Along with personal growth the growth and development of the nation. We are the youth of the nation, its future. And I cheer this idea on; yes we are ready to shoulder the mantel of our responsibilities."

non governmental organizations run by youngsters, the vast number of world quality doctors, lawyers, and professionals in every field that the country churns out year after year, the sportsmen who have made the nation proud in various fields, the soldiers who protect not only the country's frontiers but are known for their humanitarian work in troubled areas outside its boundaries too, the students who excel in every discipline and competition, the vast number of IITians and management gurus that the IIMs mould, its us, we are here to stay. Driven by passion and aspirations to make it big, fuelled by determination to not adapt but innovate, to work not only for self excellence but also to give back to the society. We all have defined visions to achieve. Along with personal growth the growth and development of the nation. We are the youth of the nation, its future. And I cheer this idea on; yes we are ready to shoulder the mantel of our responsibilities.

The one vision that the country as a whole envisages for us is to bring about change. Ridden with numerous problems of defunct systems, corruption, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, widening socio-economic inequalities, political ineptness, health issues, gender biases, communalism, age old caste and class issues, agricultural stagnancy, technological challenges, poor infrastructural development, internal

and external security, etc, etc, the country sees in the dynamism and growth of its next generation the answer to all its worries and woes. There is no denying the fact that the youth today is better sensitized to the imperative of 'inclusive growth.' It is not just empty rhetoric, but a matter of conviction accompanied by a greater awareness of societal issues. Over and over, eminent personalities in recent years have called upon the younger generation to lead the nation forward in all spheres. Right from ex-president A.P.J.Abdul Kalam, to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, to prominent industrialist Ratan Tata, and many more like figures have highlighted the strength and determination of the youth and its ability to guide the nation into a new era. In many areas the youth have already stepped forward and in others they are not far behind. The vision has been screened, the means to achieve it identified, the youth, they have the spirit to fulfill it, yet there seems to be something that's lacking.

We have had the same quality of youthful energetic people even in the past, we never lacked young blood at any time period, throughout the sixty years of independence have been harbingers of change and progress who have come from the young generation of their times. Take for example Narayan Murthy, or Ratan Tata, Dhirubai Ambani, Vikram Sarabhai, and many more. All in their times and youth have served the country to the best of their capabilities. Then what is different about our lot? True there has been a lot of technological and educational development in the country since then, the percentage of people in the age group has also increased significantly, there are new heights to scale and new avenues to be explored, the field work has already been done by the ancestors, the building has to be built now. The job for bringing about change on the whole appears to be a lot easier than supposed. Then why is it that it still is a distant dream?

And that's when another image of India's youth filled my thoughts. The deprived and distraught youth, the one with the same energy, power and potential, but lacking the necessary confidence, skill, motivation, opportunities, vision, and backing. This is the larger part of the country, ignored and deleted from everybody's vision, left alone to toil for daily survival and existence. The street urchin, the municipality wastes disposal squad, the menial laborers, the landless farmer, the poor educated unemployed, the tea vendor, the construction worker, the housemaid and many more ignored masses of energy. They live in squalor,

lay dejected and drunk on the streets, are unnamed faces amongst the crowd, their spirits crushed and trodden down upon, their only mission survival. The few who dare to dream big get lost in the callous systems or sink down to depths unknown, others resign to their fates. This is also the youth of the country, a far larger section, and then the privileged ones who are driven to excel.

So when we talk about the vision of the youth being the hand behind the change in the nation's destiny do we or do we not include this large deprived mass of energy and potential that's often wasted?

The answer is no, we bring about inclusive growth. We bridge the gaps between the two and then help harness this energy to fulfill our vision. So the government launches poverty alleviation programs, employment guarantee schemes, labor laws are revised, infrastructural development is undertaken, education is in the process of being revamped to make it more inclusive and holistic, more practical with field work, vocational training is to be imparted, technology is to be dispersed, agricultural reforms undertaken, health facilities made available, integrated development of rural areas undertaken, night schools opened, sarvashiksha abhiyan launched, setting up of more elementary schools, new IIMs and IITs, micro financing systems to be launched, public private partnership in areas of development introduced, corporate social responsibility made mandatory, etc. all these we are already familiar with. The youth participation is allowed in these programs and will ultimately lead to equality amongst the youth and fulfillment of the vision of youth bringing about the change.

This vision is a macro vision, and I have my doubts about how soon it can be fulfilled, or even if it is really probable within the existing systems, however it has shown some results and only time will tell how far it reaches.

My vision for this fragmented youth is rather simple and very humble. They have the power, potential and energy as has already been agreed upon, what they lack is empathy for one another, dignity for each as an individual, respect for the hard-work put into an honest day's labor, mutual acceptance of differences, views and needs, space to each to perform their job without interference. In the absence of these fundamental qualities there exists a chasm of complexes superior

and inferior between the two which no level of reforms or programs can do away with. There will always be a waiter and a guest at the restaurant, a chauffeur and a passenger in the limousine, a house help and a house owner at home, a peon and boss in the office, a clerk and babu in the government, a laborer and builder at a construction site, a compounder and doctor in the hospital, these are roles which have and will always exist in society. What is peculiar to Indian society is that we treat these roles as that of servants and masters. Our behavior then is accordance with this notion, those who are served are indifferent and callous in their attitudes, while those who serve are left feeling belittled and ridiculed. When both of these masters and servants fall in the same age group of the youth, how can they unite in view of these societal constraints. They remain fragmented and their strength divided. Hostilities develop between the two, and more often than not the ones less fortunate grudge the fortunate. And the blessed turn a cold shoulder to the poor.

My vision for this energetic youth is to instill this sense of respect for an individual irrespective of his class, caste, work, status in society, etc, to inculcate morals and values to go with the energy and power so as to make it sustainable, widespread and inclusive. Once we learn to respect our fellow human beings, there will never be and ridicule, lack of dignity of labor, self confidence, a helping hand and a united youth. This youth then fuelled by the efforts for the realization of the larger vision might succeed in its true sense.

Let's just imagine how we can go about doing this, its very simple and individualistic, use the 'thank you' and the 'please' with a simple smile and see the magic unfold. Say thank you the next time the conductor in the local bus hands you your ticket it will ease his otherwise foul mood, and give him some satisfaction in an otherwise thankless job, do the same for your maid, both at home and in schools, colleges, and offices. Let's do away with uniforms for peons and municipality workers. True it might take away from the formal atmosphere, but it will also help do away with classification amongst workers. Moral education should be a part of every subject taught and not as a separate subject on its own. In schools children should be taught once in a while to dispose of their own waste so that they realize the importance of the work done by the non-staff helpers. Don't give leftover food to your servant for his family, they aren't animals, don't degrade humanity. Next time you see

a laborer pulling a heavy handcart, offer him a sip of water and a word or two of sympathy. Let's do away with the system of addressing the boss as 'sahib' 'master' and likewise use of words like 'chamar' 'bai' for the helpers. There are many small ways that we can fill these gaps with. They require no sanctions just the will and grace to be humble, to respect another like you would respect yourself. If one of us starts behaving in this manner, the example will soon be followed, and the wheels for change in our attitudes will be set in motion. This is the bottom most rung of socialization in equality, if we get this right everything else will fall into place. As soon as we respect and learn to tolerate our differences, and value every fellow being as an individual the change in the nation

that we are so looking for will become just that much more easier. My vision is idealistic, emotional and personal. It touches the cords of the heart which unite like nothing else. It's simple and maybe on the fore not at all important for any kind of change or harnessing the potential of the youth. But it runs deeper than visible. If we succeed in achieving this imagine a student from an IB school and a student from a municipality school could actually be friends, the peon will never feel degraded by the boss and will work more efficiently, everyone will do their designated jobs with satisfaction, and as and when the opportunities for growth are made available they all will believe that they stand the same chance, ability, and talent to avail of them. It's the foundation of the larger vision that the country holds for the youth with all its energy power and potential. Sometimes the visions are simple and the solutions even more simple but they constitute the building blocks of equality in society. Through my nineteen years of life, having observed

"Once we learn to respect our fellow human beings, there will never be and ridicule, lack of dignity of labor, self confidence, a helping hand and a united youth. This youth then fuelled by the efforts for the realization of the larger vision might succeed in its true sense."

my surroundings, this lack of dignity of labor, respect for individuals is what I have identified as the most serious problem in Indian society. It lies at the base of all our other problems. We can polish the surface all we want, but if the core is rotten, it's going to crumble in anyways. My vision for the enlightened generation of the present age is to imbibe lessons in humility and respect to go with its power and energy.

We are all in a rat race to reach the top first, in the process we are stepping on each others shoulders to get ahead; we are running in a stampede, without realizing that the peak is a table top which can accommodate all of us. We would be much better of holding hands and helping each other up rather than pushing and in the process falling down ourselves. But in order to lend out that helping hand we must first believe that we are all equals as humans and that is my vision, for the youth of India in particular, and for all its citizens in general.

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Neeraj Kumar Singh

India's Youth Energy - Power and Potential - My Vision

"There can be no question that there is a relationship between violence and economic backwardness."

Robert McNamara

Former President of the World Bank

The year is 2020. Having lived in the Indian state of Chhattisgarh as an adolescent, I had often woken up to the newspaper which, though silent, deafened my ears with the cries of the brutal murder of humanity in Naxal violence. My thought process evolved in the backdrop of this violence towards envisioning a time when the newspapers would offer a rather more cheerful start to the day. Today, that vision is a reality.

The Problem


Until about 2006, most people thought of Naxal violence as something 'out there' – distant, vague and unrelated to their lives. However, this burgeoning violence became a concern for a large number of Indians when, owing to the 160 districts in the country being under Naxal influence, the then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh identified Naxalism as "the single biggest internal-security challenge ever faced by our country". The issue was debated amongst all who were concerned about the security and integrity of the Indian union. It was then that the urban youth realized that behind the grim statistics of numerous murders, rapes, arson, explosions and other acts of violence, there were real people who, dare I say, lived and suffered the brunt of all this. A need for change was felt.

Contrary to the state response of counter-violence to end the Naxalite terror, the youth in the country treaded a different path; the path of peace. They worked on the maxim: 'You give violence, you get violence; you give peace, you get peace'. Peace, it was realized, could be perpetual only if based on firm foundations of economic and social development. Back in 2011, after graduating from the Indian Institute of Technology Madras, I, along with a few friends, decided to reach out to our rural counterparts. Our aim was to direct our power and potential towards achieving this perpetual peace by addressing the most basic reasons behind the increase of Naxal influence, namely economic and social exclusion. We formed an organization called the 'Perpetual Peace Organization' (PPO) to achieve this objective. We worked on the principle that if violence was the answer, then you were probably asking the wrong question.

My Solution: 3 Es

I had always felt, and the research done at PPO strengthened the belief, that the fundamental reason behind the growth of Naxal movement involved illiteracy and social and economic deprivation. Prior to 2011, most development efforts in the tribal areas did not yield much fruit for the tribals themselves but only made

"Peace, it was realized, could be perpetual only if based on firm foundations of economic and social development."



them more disgruntled. This made the ground ripe for Naxal rebels to coax the rural youth into buying the idea that change can be brought through an armed struggle.

The first step towards freeing the nation from the shackles of Naxalism came in the form of the inclusion of the rural tribal youth in the narrative of development. For a large part of the history of independent India, the term youth evoked in the minds of the people an image of a young, literate and confident city-bred person who was determined to work towards his goal and achieve his ambitions. The exclusion of the rural, especially tribal youth, from the circles of development led to the intensification of social exclusion and injustice. In the wake of such discrimination, some rural youth deviated to embrace violence. Starting in 2011 in some of the most backward districts of Chhattisgarh, a proper direction was provided, under the aegis of PPO, to this rural youth energy through an immaculate coordination between the rural and urban youth. At PPO, we identified three Es – education, economic upliftment, egalitarianism - to include the affected people in the process of development:

Education: Most of the recruits of the Naxal movement were illiterate. There wasn't the bleakest possibility that they had read Mao and got influenced by his ideology. They had joined the movement not due to ideological reasons but because they had been offered an asymmetric hope of change and development by the Naxal leaders. We saw education as being indispensable to improve the capability of the rural youth if they were to work towards their own economic and social development.

We, at PPO, adopted a policy whereby the tribal youths were encouraged to get some formal education to better their employment opportunities. Volunteers from urban locales visited the affected rural areas frequently to help the rural youth with their education. The common approach was to train a young person who would then teach other people in the village. The education focused on developing specialized life skills in the youth to enhance their economic capabilities.

Economic Upliftment: It is impossible for a society to progress from indigence to prosperity without including its bottom-most rungs in the process of development.

Economic backwardness must bear a heavy share of responsibility for the deviance of some youth towards violence. We, through PPO, encouraged the rural youth to take up entrepreneurial initiatives using the life skills and specializations that they had acquired through education.

We worked towards ensuring adequate access to forest produce by the villagers – one of their prime resources. Any kind of exploitation from forest officials was checked through a system of speedy complaint redressal wherein the PPO volunteers could lodge a complaint against an officer directly at the home ministry in the state capital and ensure proper action. Instances of exploitation by the rebels were detrimental for their own selves because they lost local support when they employed such tools.

Egalitarianism: The backward regions under the influence of rebels were marked by a skewed distribution of opportunities and resources. At PPO, we made it a point to provide for equal and ample opportunity to everyone for development. Differences within the community had to be addressed for this egalitarianism to prevail. We achieved this through a system of public participation in policy making for development. All the people affected by a decision had their say in policy making and the final choice was made only through consensus. An approach of putting the needs of the last man first was adopted to provide opportunities for equitable development.

The media, spearheaded by young blood, catalyzed the process of this historic move towards peace. In 2006, when I had moved from Chhattisgarh to Chennai for my Bachelors degree, I had noted that the incidents of Naxal violence on the front pages of local newspapers of Chhattisgarh could barely manage to find a place amidst advertisements on the bottom left corner on even page 6 of a national newspaper. Right from its outset, the PPO realized the importance of engaging the media in the debate on Naxalism. The volunteers that PPO drew from the media ensured that the plight of the people in Naxal areas got due coverage. The news of efforts of this group working towards peace was carried enthusiastically by many national dailies, which prompted more youth from urban areas to contribute to this effort, either monetarily or by volunteering.

The Problems Faced and The Solutions Implemented

The government raised its eyebrows at our initiative in the PPO. It was highly skeptical about our success since it seemed unlikely that what could not be done by a powerful government backed by armed forces could be done by a few inspired youth. We had, however, got our priorities right in targeting illiteracy and economic deprivation. Yet, we had to overcome many obstacles.

Firstly, when we ventured into the rural areas, we could not afford to take help from the government, either monetary or security, lest we were seen as agents of the government by the rebels. For funds, the organization relied mainly on the awareness generated by our campaigns for inclusive development. The media coverage provided to the process also kept us well funded. The rural citizens were not made addicted to aid. Instead they were made capable of being agents of their own development by expanding their capabilities through education and employment.

The second problem was related to gaining the trust of the rural people to ensure their cooperation. The policy to hammer this challenge was based on the principle of participation in governance. We did not impose any pre-structured policy on the villages for development. Instead, the policies were formed through a consensus of all the stakeholders affected by it. The rural youth played a vital role in this by mediating the ideas between the PPO members and the community. This participation provided the villagers the political strength for decision making which they had never received either from the government or the rebels.

On the third front we had a fear of retaliation from the Naxals against this movement. This, however, never happened because our work was not seen as a part of the state machinery. The work done by the youth was through the consent of the villagers and resulted in enhancement of economic and educational capacities of the rural people. The Naxals could not direct their efforts against us as we were working for the development of the community which they sought to 'liberate'.

The scale of vision that the PPO and I had set forth – a Naxal-free India – required pooling of immense youth energy to work across the 160 affected districts, nearly two hundred thousand villages. The problem was overcome by involving, in this process, various youth networks already in place. The PPO drew youths who specialized in medicine, engineering, sciences, social sciences and fine arts to address the different aspects of underdevelopment. I, as an economist, provided consultancy for the viability of various entrepreneurial and economic initiatives taken by the rural people. The rural youth were empowered to act as agents of change within their villages.

The Change

The efforts of the PPO began to visibly pay off by 2014. A positive social and economic change was seen in the communities once marked by the Naxalite terror. The initiative was, hence, expanded to cover all the Naxal affected areas. The youth energy directed towards development made the political base of Naxalism gradually wither off. As the ambit of the work of PPO increased, the number of volunteers recruited by Naxals started dwindling. Today, after nine years of the start of the organization, we have achieved our objective and the Indian union has been freed from the Naxal violence. The power of the Indian youth has strengthened the security of the nation by working towards inclusive development. Having recognized the relevance of economic disadvantage in the context of the Naxalite movement, we directed our energy towards spearheading major reforms in the areas of economic, education and technical assistance to keep the integrity of the Indian union intact. Indian youth have once again shown, beyond doubt, what their power and potential can amount to. And the newspapers, these days, do offer a more cheerful start to the day.

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Solution of a triangle: a “Bottom to Top” approach

Introduction...

We live in an imperfect world. Look around once and you would see a chaotic scene, almost everything is going wrong and society is tumbling down the rabbit hole towards anarchy.

Summon some courage and look again. You would see, as I did, that underneath this bedlam, of innocent people being massacred by anti-national elements, politicians holding the common man to ransom, eradication of poverty still remaining a dream and the majority of poor, illiterate, unemployed and frustrated Indians finding solace in partisanship, lie a few recurring problems which seem to spread like an epidemic, crippling the social machinery.

On one hand this is heartening as we have fewer problems to solve, on the other we are awed by the scale of damage being done by them.

Now...look once more, but this time with hope, and through the endless mist a solution will materialise.

It all started when I entered IIT Bombay this year...

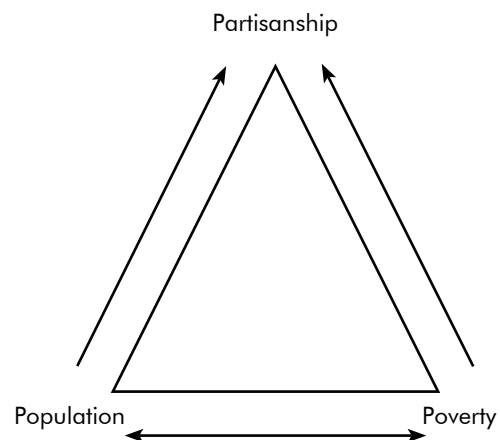
Although I lived more or less in the same world before that too, population, poverty and the like were essentially text book terms. The same text was repeated every year and perhaps the barrage of history and civics ensured that the seriousness of the situation was lost on us and made us believe that it was Government's concern to combat the situation.

Of late I could feel a lethal poison creeping into society. That which was never openly acknowledged, that which would never be discussed in any class; partisanship. It cracks up human society due to fault lines of language, culture, religion, region, caste and creed.

But the moment I entered my college campus, all traces of partisanship vanished. The politics of the outer world did not percolate there. We spoke in whichever language we were comfortable in, endorsed and respected every conceivable view to a controversial topic and celebrated every festival with equal enthusiasm. Indeed the only time we came to know of our religious, regional and other affiliations was when we celebrated festivals or left for home for our holidays. Only then did we become a Hindu or Muslim, a Bihari or Maharashtrian

And when I started pondering over this issue of partisanship, what figured in my mind was, what I call, “The Traumatic Triangle”.

The Traumatic Triangle...



The two vertices of the “base” of the triangle are Population and Poverty. These two problems have such strong and deep roots in Indian society that no amount of superficial and arbitrary measures can eradicate these deep roots. And since the roots are deep, we need a “Bottom to Top” approach to resolve these issues, hitting right at the grass root level.

Although I accept that there is not a simple two-way linear relationship between population and poverty, I am working around the basic relationships and once the model starts giving initial results, more complex relationships can be incorporated into this model.

Of late, many dismiss the argument that population is a problem for India. The counter-argument is that for India, population is not a liability; it’s an asset, her Human Resources. To me, this counter-argument is as fallacious as a statement that ‘all land is asset, whether fertile or barren’. Population with employable skills

can only be productive population, and therefore, an asset. It is the unutilized, unskilled, and uninitiated manpower that poisons growth. On the other hand, their basic necessities for life need to be met, since not by themselves, necessarily by the Government. This obviously leads to poverty; at individual level as well as a nation.

And now let us see how poverty leads to population.

Poverty will essentially mean that the individual and the Government will be stretched to provide the bare minimum, leaving hardly anything for education. And this vast population, uneducated and therefore highly influenced by “children are gift of God” syndrome on the one hand and ignorant about the family planning measures on the other, can produce only one thing...more population.

The third vertex, “partisanship” has started assuming serious proportions over last couple of decades, but currently is on the brink of explosion unless combated urgently.

Population begets Poverty begets Population. The only easy way out of this vicious circle encourages people to blame their sorry state on ‘outsiders’ or discrimination on the basis of religion and caste leading to partisanship.

Then, what’s the “Solution of this Triangle”?

My solution of the triangle is “Uttarayan, Ek Abhiyan”, which shall provide “awakening education”, plain and simple. By education I do not mean lessons in Calculus or the Third Law of Thermodynamics, but it’s a dialogue which will spread awareness, dispel any distrust and doubts and enable an individual to stand on his own in whichever field he chooses. It will be the crucial link between the real world and the ideal world.

For implementation of “Uttarayan”, a “Youth Brigade” will be launched.

The Youth Brigade...

“Youth Brigade” will, at first tier, have “Youth Leaders”

“Youth Leaders” will be undergraduate students of engineering, medicine, science, technology, law, arts, commerce, management and all other streams across the country in the age group 17 to 21. The unity in diversity combined by the idealistic, holistic and progressive beliefs make this the largest and most maneuverable group with a staggering reach across the length and breadth of the country. It is a resource waiting to be tapped, floodgates waiting to be opened...

Each team called “YL Team” will have two to four members and will have a diverse composition in terms of religion, region, caste, creed and financial status. This will not only give the team a wider and deeper network but also ensure a healthy dialogue between tomorrow’s citizens. The allotted village or town will be the home town of at least one member of the team so that the team is absolutely familiar with the local language, culture, religious sentiments and other social references.

Assuming that only 10 % of approximately 1.4 crores undergraduate students across India participate in “Youth Brigade”, with average team size of 3, each team covering 50 families with average adult family size of 4, approximately 9.5 crores adult population can be covered by “Youth Brigade”.

Each “YL Team” will select, at second tier, a group of 10 school children in the allotted village / town. This team will be called “FL Team” (Future Leaders Team). This serves three purposes.

Firstly, we will have a fully trained and motivated next generation YL who will carry on the crusade.

Secondly, the magnitude of this mission requires more than just undergraduates. There will be street plays, processions, ballets, seminars and classroom sessions. For this we need children to participate.

“The unity in diversity combined by the idealistic, holistic and progressive beliefs make this the largest and most maneuverable group with a staggering reach across the length and breadth of the country.”

Thirdly, involving children gives us access to schools, teachers and faculty who can play a very effective role. Children can effectively solicit their parents, neighbours, relatives and friends to take part in the movement.

“Youth Brigade” will effectively use an already existing infrastructure, undergraduate colleges and educational institutions. This will not only significantly reduce additional resource requirements but also make team building and networking easier. Only end semester and summer vacations will be used, so that the academic schedule is not disturbed at all.

Each “YL Team”, during its vacations, will mentor about 50 families in the allotted village / town. Mentoring will involve propagating the views and programmes of “Uttarayan” and taking feedback of the common man, which will be used to modify the programmes, thus making it dynamic.

The “Uttarayan” programmes will be, “Master Programmes” and “Local Programmes”.

“Master Programmes” will be designed by eminent sociologist, academicians and psychologists from academic and social institutions and will constitute a think tank which will have student representatives. These programmes will detail programme tools, programme contents and programme material. “Master Programmes” will be localised into “Local Programmes” by local schools and faculty so as to adapt to local language, culture, social and religious references, thus making them socially relevant and effective.

A website will be created which will connect all the centers across India. This will serve as the principal communication link and also help in publicity.

Programme Tools...

Devising and designing programme tools will be crucial to the success of the mission because howsoever important the message, unless programme tools are innovative, audience-oriented and socially relevant, the message will become ineffective, boring and bookish. There need to be a human touch to all “Youth Brigade” activities.

Programme tools, to convey desired message, will include:

- Street plays, especially outside places of worship, near market places, etc. where crowd is readily available
- Street songs
- Ballets (Nritya-Natya)
- Plays at local festivals, “melas”
- Pictorial exhibitions
- Audio-visuals, wherever facilities are available
- Handouts, especially of pictorial messages
- Wall posters painted by children

Youth Leaders and Future Leaders shall be encouraged on a continuous basis to suggest newer tools because these young minds are mines of unexplored imagination.

Programme Contents...

Programme contents will address all three issues, viz. population control, poverty eradication and partisanship.

Population: People need to be convinced that the main reason of their plight is size of their family. Focus shall be on elimination of “children are gift of God”

syndrome, awareness of free government aid for family planning and creating a mindset to avail the same. High infant mortality rate also is the cause of high birth rate. Hence, people should be encouraged to avail of free vaccination facilities.

Poverty eradication: A lot of efforts are already on at Government and NGO levels in this regard. Huge resources are already deployed by them. “Uttarayan” shall endeavour to complement these efforts. People will be informed of various Government schemes available for men as well as women to gain vocational skills as well as family planning schemes. At proper stages, they shall be made aware of the Micro-finance and Micro-enterprise concepts.

Partisanship: Since partisanship is the offshoot of poverty, the programme contents mentioned above will be relevant to partisanship too. But the crux of the matter is that when people start realising the importance of and thereby focusing on their financial uplifting, the ill-spirit of partisanship will automatically wither away. Messages on the history of struggle for independence and the price paid for it as well as ill effects of partisanship on national integrity shall be spread.

Drivers to Success...

Bitter though it may sound, it is obvious that we need to compete with cushy internship offers and prestigious academic projects if we need to get the best young minds in the country for the mission. To attract students to the mission, project participation and performance will be rewarded by giving academic credits and also by considering it as part of internship, where applicable. Requirement of funds will be met by sponsorships from corporates in agriculture, healthcare, telecommunication and microfinance, private colleges and television channels.

Since, corporates have budgets for CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), the mission can get this funding also.

“Uttarayan” will be self-propelling and independent of the Government. Nevertheless, it will use existing government machinery especially in population

control and eradication of poverty and hence complement Government's efforts. This will avoid duplication of efforts and optimise resources.

Television channels will be persuaded to give wide publicity, without a fee, to "Uttarayan" as a social responsibility.

Awards will be instituted for outstanding participants (much like this Young Visionary Awards initiative).

Eventually, "Uttarayan" will be built into a brand.

To quote one of the greatest visionaries of all time,

*"I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted,
and every hill and mountain shall be made low,
the rough places will be made plain,
and the crooked places will be made straight; ...
... This is our hope, and this is the faith that I go back with...."*

Martin Luther King

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Nishtha Mishra

My Vision: India the Knowledge Power

There's no doubt that India has changed. It has broken the world's image of it simply being the land of Taj Mahal and snake charmers and has finally emerged to be a rising giant. India's economic growth has been steady at around 7-8 percent since the 1990s and though the current financial crisis is affecting the market in India (as in other countries), India is still Asia's major economic power, along with China and Russia. There is no denying India's rich cultural inheritance, the distinct qualities of its people, its large democracy or its capabilities as a nuclear power. But there is still more change to come. My vision for India now is for it to re-emerge as a knowledge superpower, to be the frontrunner of change and open up opportunities throughout the country to churn out leaders who transform human thinking. There's much that ancient India contributed to the human pool of knowledge: zero, the decimal system, a table of sines, numerical interpolation. Gandhi put forward the idea of satyagraha, inspiring several leaders in both Africa and the Americas in their fight for freedom. More recently, Indian writers, entrepreneurs, economists, artists like Amartya Sen, Sabeer Bhatia, Arundhati Roy and others have put forth their ideas. However, considering the fact that we're a nation of one billion people, there's a lot more that we can achieve by ourselves without relying on the inflow of knowledge from the West. Utilizing the energy of the youth and giving them opportunities to self-explore and pursue their interests is the key in making India a global knowledge power.

One of the things which need to be drastically reformed in order to encourage independence of thought, critical thinking and creativity in India is education.

A student who seeks to excel academically has no choice, but to replicate answers off the textbooks in order to maximize his/her chances of answering 'correctly.'

Questions don't encourage students to answer with an open mind. For example, one can see from the questions below that they only ask for facts and relatively straightforward answers rather than encouraging new interpretations from the student about Shooting an Elephant by G. Orwell:

"What is the opposite of 'theoretical and secret' in paragraph two?"

"What simile does Orwell use in paragraph six? Explain its appropriateness."

"Which words in lines 1-5 relate to the performing arts?" etc.

*From Contemporary English: An Anthology for Undergraduates (2008)

A question asking the student to write a commentary on the text detailing on the

"Utilizing the energy of the youth and giving them opportunities to self-explore and pursue their interests is the key in making India a global knowledge power."

finer aspects of the poem, would instead be more interesting and would generate more ideas from students. It would also force students to respond critically to the text as a whole rather than merely looking at the technicalities of it. Thus the approach to learning needs to be rectified. The different boards of education in India (i.e. CBSE, ICSE, CISCE, etc) should have a coordinated effort to encourage more class participation in schools (to encourage active thinking), to set more assignments on a regular basis (in order to put less weight on final exams) and to change exam questions in order to test the students' ability to form their own interpretations/responses with well-supported evidence and encourage them to use different methods to solve a problem rather than a 'prescribed' method every time. Answers would, of course, be judged on how well they're supported with evidence gathered from theories, experience, etc. However, teachers and students alike would only follow through with these guidelines if they were provided incentives (i.e. if all these changes were adopted into the exam system. For example, if the end-of-year exams also included an oral component, students would try to participate more in class and if there was a change in the kind of questions asked (to include more open-ended questions) in the exams, students would be prompted to develop critical thinking in order to do well.

In addition, there is the problem of limited teachers with limited number of time to cover the syllabus. This actually turns out to be one of the main reasons why teachers often rush to provide the answers rather than letting students to try and tackle them themselves. A solution to this would be for the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) to finance the opening up of training institutes for teachers in order to put across effective teaching methods (like the ones discussed earlier) and so that there would be an increase in the number of teachers in the country. With more teachers, students would be able to get more attention and the teachers would be able to lead more engaging class discussions with smaller class sizes.

Another issue is that many students are unable to freely pursue their non-academic interests due to the stress imposed on them by academics. In order for India to be a knowledge power, it is not enough to only have engineers, doctors and economists. It is also important for the youth to be able to freely pursue non-academic interests like dance, visual art, community service, music, tennis, track

and field, creative writing, theatre, etc. Again, the 'academics' departments of the education boards of India, along with the National Council of Education, Research and Training (NCERT), should form the syllabus for some of these subjects to be taught till the final year in school, especially if students continue to show interest. This would allow the youth to pursue non-traditional subjects in school itself, if not outside it. For other pursuits, like community service and social work, schools themselves could organize trips to local orphanages, old age homes, etc.

The stress/time taken up by studies could also be reduced if students could take up less subjects. For example, one could do away with studying a little of all three sciences each year in grades 6-8, and instead could set a different year-long science course each year. In addition, the HRD should do away with the art, humanities and science stream system in school and instead should set up requirements as to how long a student should study math, science, etc. There should be widespread efforts to increase the number of seminars, workshops, events and internships across the country by state-sponsorship and by perhaps setting a rule which would require all private enterprises, NGOs, etc to hold a certain number of seminars, workshops and/or internships in various fields each year. This would insure the students getting ample opportunities to learn about the real world through leaders who are already a part of it. This would be different from reading anything off career brochures and would set students thinking about the changes they would want to initiate or start off.

The mindset of the people also needs to change; Indians need to get rid of the notion that only a 98.65% in an annual exam can get you success along with bright career prospects in life. This is also, perhaps one of the reasons why India's youth is sometimes discouraged to take up non-academic interests: out of fear of not being able to support oneself eventually. Clearly, placing a quota for students with strong extra-curricular interests in schools and universities is not enough to drive participation. For people's mindset to change, Indians need to see that there truly are opportunities available for people who pursue the art, or music.

It would also be a good idea to set a "Personal Project" for students, as there is in the Middle Years Program (IB). As a MYP student, I found it really exciting to be working on a topic of my own choice: the important characteristics of imagist

“Assuming the role of a knowledge power would be possible through a series of reforms in the education system in order to inculcate qualities that are essential to producing creative, inquisitive minds in the country.”

poems and how to write them. I was able to learn more about what I was already interested in and it gave me an idea on how I could go about compiling a book of poems next time I write.

Similarly, on a national level, it's also important to promote increased (and improved) research and development (R & D) in order to actively drive innovation in the country. Our pharmaceutical industry has already been seeing a lot of success. An unfortunate case, however, was Ranbaxy, which had formerly been the largest pharmaceutical company in India. On its selling out to Daiichi Sankyo, a Japanese firm. Prof. Sumit Majumdar asserts in his article 'Ranbaxy sell-out — Indian entrepreneurs not come of age yet?' that we're now seeing entrepreneurs lose their ability to “think deeply through strategic ideas” and their motivation falling out to be “short-term-oriented” and their objective being to “generate cash, not create a legacy.” Thus, in order for India to emerge as a knowledge power, it's important for industries to have a creative team in India who can think strategically at hand so that in the future the leaders don't state “If someone else can create more value and do things better, you should be open to exploring those options” as a reason for selling out, as Malvinder Mohan Singh had done. The pharma industry, along with others, would also need a proper policy framework (as to soften up strict regulations) and adequate funding (perhaps from venture capitalists, government's tax revenue and financial institutions). As we're already into so called 'knowledge millennium' of the 21st century, it is necessary to innovate and discover more.

In conclusion, a lot of changes have yet to be made in order for India to re-emerge

as a knowledge power with leaders who can invent, innovate and continue to do so without reaching a 'plateau.' Assuming the role of a knowledge power would be possible through a series of reforms in the education system in order to inculcate qualities that are essential to producing creative, inquisitive minds in the country. Other changes like increased R and D, and increased involvement of all sectors to unleash India's potential would be working towards the same goal: to make Indians think out of the box. A lot of other measure are also being taken like the Teach India initiative launched by The Times of India to bring out educated people from the cities to teach illiterate children on their own time, and Imagine how many Amartya Sens and J. K. Rowlings might be walking around in India, not realizing their own potential. It's time that we became more than storehouses of knowledge. We need to take the lead now!

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India's Youth Energy - Power and Potential - Your Vision

The classroom where my father had studied was a rusty little room with no benches in it. My father called his teacher “punditji”. The punditji was very strict and taught the students with utmost passion and devotion. The society also, in return, respected the punditji and always looked at him with eyes full of veneration and approbation.

“Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. It is a tool for daily life in modern society. It is a bulwark against poverty, and a building block of development, an essential complement to investments in roads, dams, clinics and factories. Literacy is a platform for democratization, and a vehicle for the promotion of cultural and national identity. Especially for girls and women, it is an agent of family health and nutrition. For everyone, everywhere, literacy is, along with education in general, a basic human right.... Literacy is, finally, the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman and child can realize his or her full potential.”

Kofi Annan

Hence, in my essay, I have highlighted the problem of ailing **primary education in government schools of India**, which is followed by the ways with which we can tackle this problem. After all, it is the primary education which shapes the **youth**.

The primary education in government schools of 1960's – as my father saw it

When I first heard about the competition, I was sitting in the garden with my father. I mentioned the name of the topic to my father. On hearing the word “youth”, my father got reminiscent and started talking about his childhood.

As he narrated his childhood saga, he described the golden days he had spent in school. He elucidated whatever he could summon up in his grey cells – from friends to teachers, from nursery to college, from January to February – everything. I kept on hearing him patiently. Somewhere in between he had remarked that he had received his primary education in a government school. I couldn't believe it! In a government school??? My father's basic arithmetic powers and knowledge are much better than me. But he had studied in a government school!!!

I am talking of 1960's. The classroom where my father had studied was a rusty little room with no benches in it. My father called his teacher “punditji”. The punditji was very strict and taught the students with utmost passion and devotion. The society also, in return, respected the punditji and always looked at him with eyes full of veneration and approbation. In those days, if the student did not turn

up in the classes for more than two consecutive days, the punditji would ensure that the news about his absence was sent to the student's home.

In a nutshell, we can say that the infrastructure lacked, but the quality of learning and the commitment of the teacher were indeed very authentic.

The primary education in government schools today – as I see it

Contrary to the government schools of 1960's are today's government schools. There may benches today in these schools, but there is no education. I paid a visit to a government school nearby my house and even inter-viewed a student. That student, although in 5th standard, could not write or speak "a,b,c,d,e,f.....". He couldn't even add 13 and 16. I doubt whether some of the government school teachers would be able to do it either. The teachers in government schools are paid hefty salaries, but they lack the motivation to teach.

Then there is corruption as usual. The government provides the funds for free lunch in primary schools, along with the funds for uniform, books, pencils, note books, etc. I doubt whether even half of the money allotted to these reaches its true destination – the naïve students.

Statistics may say that the literacy rate in India is escalating. But I cannot fathom how this type of an education in government schools contributes to increasing the literacy rate.

The Vision

In my hometown Baroda, there were 60,000 students enrolled in government schools in 1993. This number has fallen down to around 42,000 in 2008 in spite of the population in city getting doubled.

Millions of children in India study in government schools. These millions are just like dummy puppets sitting in a classroom. Here is the vast youth potential that we must exploit.

Just imagine what would happen if the government schools become at par with the private schools of today. We will have an India of our dreams, where

- Illiteracy will be eradicated from its roots.
- Over-population would no longer be a problem as people living in slums would realize the fact "Hum do, Hamare do".
- People would know the basic rules of hygiene, thereby putting a halt to epidemics.
- These will of course be the paramount boons, but we all know that the list goes on.

And the Solutions !!!!!!!!!

I present a solution to the critical quandary of stinking primary education in India by answering some facile but to the point questions.

What should be done to these government schools, which are nothing more than buildings containing blackboards and chalks?

As we discern the downfall of primary education in government schools, I suggest to terminate this system of government schooling without any clutter. After all, the government schools are not serving any purpose other than filling the pockets of corrupt administrators. I acknowledge the fact that we can't just go about destroying the government school buildings. So here is what I think should be done.

Every existing government school should be allotted a private school as a mentor. The private school will look after the recruitment of teachers, methodology of teaching, exams, etc. in the government school. The government will give some incentive

"Just imagine what would happen if the government schools become at par with the private schools of today. We will have an India of our dreams..."

to the private school in the form of money. You might say that this will cost a lot to the government. But here is the fact.

In my hometown Baroda, the government presently spends around Rs. 34 crores in funding primary education in government schools. With around 42,000 students in the city, this amounts to Rs 8000 being spent on each student!!!!!!

Now, there are around 100 government schools in Baroda. So if the government provides each private school mentor Rs.1 lakh per annum, then its total expenditure would increase by a meager 1 crore, when compared to the total of Rs.34 crore it spends presently in the city.

As soon as this step is taken, the government school teachers, who up till now considered the school as a picnic spot, will feel the pressure to teach.

As the time proceeds, the government should hand over all the administrative powers to the private school mentor. Of course, the government will still have the chains in its hand as it has in no way sold the school. A central administrative body should be formed by the government, which will monitor the working of private schools. This body will consist of government officials along with imminent people from various fields such as education, industry, medicine, etc. Since this administrative body will consist of independent individuals along with government officials, corruption does not stand a chance.

An exam will be conducted by the government for the students in 2nd and 5th standards. More than 75% of the students of the government school must pass the examination for the private school to continue being its mentor. This will definitely ensure that private schools impart rigorous teaching to the students.

“Many people living in slums don’t send their children to school even if education is free due to the simple reason that the school is quite far away from their dwelling.”

We see that by employing this idea, the government slowly backs out from the education sector. It’s only function now will be to keep a track of all schools and be vigilant to any sort of malpractice, which in reality is very unlikely to occur.

How can we force the adequately literate persons in India, especially the youth like me, to share their knowledge with the children living in slums?

Many people living in slums don’t send their children to school even if education is free due to the simple reason that the school is quite far away from their dwelling. These people, of course, cannot think of any means of transport except cycle. Other important reasons as to why people don’t send their child to school in India are child labour and blind beliefs. So how do we provide education to such children??? This requires a new scheme from the side of government, which I would call “informal education scheme”.

Under this “informal education scheme”, any citizen of India, whose age is more than 18 years, can teach a bunch of students. Once the age of a student is 10 years, he will appear in an exam conducted by the central government. If the student clears this exam, he/she will get the certificate of having passed the fifth standard. The government will provide the citizen, a reward of Rs.5,000 for every student who passes the exam due to his teaching.

Here are some important rules regarding the scheme which must be adhered to:

- The citizen must have taught the student for at least five years before he appears for the exam.
- The level of difficulty of the exam will be at par with the exam given by students of fifth standard in private schools.
- This scheme is only for students whose parents fall in the “very low income” category.
- The age of the student must be at least 10 years before he appears for the exam. But there is no upper limit.
- The reward will be given to the citizen only if the student clears the exam in all subjects.

- A single citizen cannot earn more than Rs.50,000 per annum out of teaching, that is, not more $(50,000/5,000) = 10$ students can pass the exam every year under his/her guidance.

Even if 1,00,000 students all over India pass fifth standard through this scheme, the cost to the government will be a meager $(5,000 * 1,00,000) = 50$ crore.

So we see that this scheme has the potential to provide primary education to a mammoth number of children in India, along with providing a means of income to many citizens of India. Through this scheme, even the young enthusiastic housewives can earn money for themselves.

Why in God's name is a B.Ed. (Bachelor of Education) degree a necessary requirement to become a teacher?

I am pursuing Mechanical Engineering in IIT Delhi. At the end of four years, when I have received my degree, I plan to teach in some school. Many students like me have the same desire. But we don't have the B.Ed. degree.

Nowadays, we find private tuition classes almost everywhere in the country. The tutors of these classes teach much better than the school teachers. But they don't necessarily possess a B.Ed. degree.

Many **young people like me** are willing to pursue the career of teaching. So the requirement of a B.Ed. degree to teach in schools should be abolished. We must realize that **"Utilizing the power of youth to exploit the potential of youth is must."**

To Conclude

India, without the required literacy in youth is like a water-melon without any juice. If my suggestions are followed, I am sure that the juice will come in. It will take some time. After all, "Rome was not built in a day". We all know this saying. But my young friends, we will build India into a nation better than Rome, won't we!!!!!!

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Prashant Gautam



India's Youth Energy - Power and Potential - My Vision

Never before has it been more appropriate to call India the land of possibilities. Thriving with a robust economy and an overwhelmingly large youth population, it is, at long last, in a position where its economic and political take-off and thus its transformation into a super-power seems highly probable. In fact, the present generation will actually be instrumental in converting our nation from an average third world performer to a prominent player at the global level. Their contribution is thus paramount for the materialization of this incredible dream. This condition is similar to the one that prevailed in the post-independence era, where the idea of a developed India had caught the imagination of both the country's masses and its intelligentsia. But this time, we are far better prepared. At this critical juncture, the youth, with their huge share in the population, need to shoulder the onus of being the real accelerators of a movement that would steer India towards perpetual prosperity.

Indian youth, if considered collectively, make up an extremely diversified group. Youngsters hailing from different backgrounds and strata of society represent different cultures, ideologies and aspirations. But what binds them together is an innate desire to succeed in life which is further fueled by their confidence in India's potential to deliver. All of them want to get swayed by the high tide of India's upwardly rise and expect to reach the shores that could satiate their hunger for success. This optimism is coupled with strong patriotic emotions and a sense of belongingness towards their homeland. All of us want India to emerge as a winner, all of us expect a share of the pie and we're all convinced that it'll definitely come our way. Everyone's joined in the euphoria, but few have a clue as to how all this would be brought about. Not many are aware or bothered about the steps that would be decisive to India's progress, but all are eager to be first in the line to reap its benefits. Most of us are unintentionally self-centered and are preoccupied with our own objectives. Today, we all need a paradigm that could reign over the cacophony of the disarrayed opinions and guide us about how the contributions of the youth could add up to the grand goal that lies ahead.

“Indian youth, if considered collectively, make up an extremely diversified group. Youngsters hailing from different backgrounds and strata of society represent different cultures, ideologies and aspirations. But what binds them together is an innate desire to succeed in life which is further fueled by their confidence in India's potential to deliver.”

I've, here, attempted to put forth a few suggestions about how the young Indians can do their bit for the nation's development. These don't encompass any intricate plan of action, but simple steps which, if followed unremittingly, can yield significant results. The point is that not everyone needs to be the torch-bearer. Little, well-intentioned gestures, carried out with a sincere spirit, will do the trick.

Respect the Idea of India: Picking the Right Ideology

The founders of our nation had dreamt to create a sovereign country which is democratic and secular to the core and whose people don't get into petty squabbles based on caste, creed, religion or language. They achieved what they'd planned to and India emerged with its charitable and tolerant character. All of us have lived in harmony with each other, displaying a commendable example of unity in diversity. But the past few decades have seen the rise of both terrorism and non-secular politics, both of which have created an environment of animosity between different religious and ethnic groups. This unfortunate development has made people harbor ill-feelings against each other and is posing a threat to our stability as a nation. What is sad about this is that even educated individuals have started taking sides and bad-mouthing about each other. We cannot expect to progress in a scenario like this.

The stance taken by the youth is crucial in such a situation because they decide whether they'll curb the disputes or take them to the next level. Every Indian who is committed to the cause of the nation should, thus, refrain from ignominiously sinking down to the levels where issues are made out of religious, cultural or linguistic differences. The youth should not get into mud-slinging, inspired by tensions among different groups but strengthen the national ideals by imbibing the virtues of unity and secularism in such trying times. They also need to motivate others around them to adopt a similar liberal mindset and thus infuse a spirit of fraternity and oneness. Lastly, we should always be prepared to support, physically, monetarily and ideologically, the individuals and groups that stand up for communal harmony and togetherness.

Pass on the Optimism Bug

India, today, is in a strange situation. Its social, political and economic journey has taken a meandering course and its present status quo simultaneously inspires euphoria and melancholy. It thus looks both poised and doomed. But it's actually our attitude that makes the real difference. If India is deficient on many fronts, then there is isn't dearth of reasons to feel great about it either. It was left abandoned by the foreigners six decades ago, after centuries of exploitation, but it managed to pull itself together. Today, we're self-sufficient in a number of sectors and are capable of manufacturing our own missiles, airplanes, spaceships, satellites and metro trains. Our economy is soaring and our GDP rate is far better than what it was a few decades back. Things can only get better for us, provided the youth recognizes our country's true potential.

We can usher in changes by becoming apostles of this spirit of optimism. We need to let everyone around us feel the heat of the Indian aspirations. Let them realize that India's not a hopeless mess but the land of a billion opportunities. Discuss with them about India's achievements on different fronts. Try to enumerate the palatable aspects pertaining to India's rise rather than those which exhibit its shortcomings. It will collectively have an impact all of us that will drive away our pessimistic notions, strengthen our national character and motivate us to contribute towards country's growth.

Don't Shun from Politics

The universal right to vote is what was supposed to be the most remarkable feature of our democracy. It, in a way, passed the reins of our country's administration in the common man's hand, giving him the right to choose the most deserving person to rule the country. The true success of our democracy lies in the active participation from all and sundry. But all these years of politicizing the democracy has resulted in the disenchantment of the voters from the entire electoral procedure and his faith on the politician seems to be irretrievably lost. An attitude like this is nothing less than disastrous. The youngsters harbor a similar notion and want to

have nothing do to with choosing the people who'd run the country. But we need to understand that if a real revolution is to be brought about, we'll have to stop considering politics a dirty, alien domain and try on our levels to change its face.

We can all start by diligently casting our votes. Let's face it. Not all politicians are hopeless. There are many who are definitely a few shades better if not thoroughly saintly. Let's give such a candidate a chance over others. We can passively volunteer for him by encouraging our peers and acquaintances to vote for him. This way we can make sure that a few votes go for a really deserving person.

The next step should be plunging into mainstream politics. It's tragic that a large chunk of proficient and erudite individuals turn a cold shoulder towards their political obligations. They discard the professional possibilities in politics and abandon it to become a bastion of crude and rustic people. If even a single percent of the total number of educated and committed youth pledge to enter conventional politics, it can work out an absolute renovation of our political picture and make it as decorous and appealing as it is in other developed countries. An Indian Obama or Sarkozy will then not remain that far-fetched an idea.

Another constructive solution can be the formation of a political party that stands for our country's doctrines and dogmas and could serve as an alternative for both the masses and the individuals who don't join politics because of the hassles involved and the lack of an ethical framework. It'll redeem our politics from all the scandals and conspiracies and stimulate the national progress.

Modern Versus Western: The Eternal Duel

A quintessential youngster of today's era is much smitten by the idea of a glitzy, modernized lifestyle, heavily inspired by their western counterparts. The current generation, with all the global exposure, has transformed into a very different breed in comparison to their immediate predecessors. But this change has sadly led to a situation where the youngsters have developed a penchant for all the western concepts and contempt for the Indian way of life. What creates a problem

“We are the representatives of our nation in the new era and the lack of a sense of respect for our roots will lead to the extinction of our unique identity. The onus is, thus, on the youth to conserve our Indian-ness and make it go hand-in-hand with development.”

is the fact that in the quest to modernize ourselves, we fail to differentiate between what is modern and what is western.

Modernity is an outcome of modern upbringing, education and exposure that stimulates a person to think, opine and act rationally and with open-mindedness. Modernity doesn't lie in blindly aping all the west because not everything it offers is appropriate and worth acquiring. The merits of our culture are widely acknowledged all over the world but it ironically suffers neglect and indifference in our own country. It beats me why we don't see that our own legacy has many valuable offerings.

Being Indian implies living an austere life spun around one's responsibility towards his family, surroundings and the society and stresses on strong domestic and communal bonds. When people reject the virtues of being Indian, then its collective impact dilutes our ethnicity and we end up losing the characteristics that make our culture and heritage exceptional. It's true that not everything about our culture is nice and an enlightened individual is therefore expected to select only the productive aspects of it. We are the representatives of our nation in the new era and the lack of a sense of respect for our roots will lead to the extinction of our unique identity. The onus is, thus, on the youth to conserve our Indian-ness and make it go hand-in-hand with development.

The Incredible Indian Gene Pool: An Assemblage of Satyagrahis

There are innumerable traits that set us Indians apart from the rest of the world. We are considered to be one of the best minds in the world and our countrymen routinely make it big at the global podium in fields as diverse as software, genetics, fashion, arts and sports. A large chunk of the total workforce employed by organizations like NASA and Microsoft is Indian. When millennia ago, the people elsewhere were living as food-gatherers, Indians were busy writing treatises on philosophy, surgery and administration and solving complex problems of trigonometry and astronomy! We, in spite of being subjugated for centuries, have repeatedly fought back with renewed resilience and never stopped producing intellectuals and luminaries. Indian is a land of gifted people and, with the efforts of its competent population, is bound to shine.

Change for India is waiting to arrive. It's none other than us, the youth, who can bring it about and this simply can't happen without changing ourselves. We can start by stopping chest-beating about India's deficiencies and initiate revolutions at individual levels. Let's scrutinize our own actions and make the necessary improvements. Most important is to avoid breaking rules and contributing in corruption. Every Indian needs to live the life of a perennial Satyagrahi and work out miniature revolutions in our own domains so that all our efforts gain coherence and manifest themselves into country's development.

These solutions may not appeal everyone and some may prefer calling them far-fetched but their assiduous implementation is sure to create a congruously productive ambience which is the prerequisite for a nation's rise to the status of a superpower.

Prashant Gautam
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“Change for India is waiting to arrive. It's none other than us, the youth, who can bring it about and this simply can't happen without changing ourselves. We can start by stopping chest-beating about India's deficiencies and initiate revolutions at individual levels. Let's scrutinize our own actions and make the necessary improvements.”



Sayan Ganguly

Made in India

India's Youth Energy: Power and Potential

The potential and power within the young is tremendous and has no equal. Nations have been built and destroyed because of its youth. Whether it's the destructive efficiency of wartime Germany or the entrepreneurial wizardry of the USA, they were all a result of their youth's dynamism. When we say India has the largest youth population in the world, we admit that we are the most well positioned to be the supreme power on the planet in the coming years. But a huge youth population can also be a destructive force if they are misguided and dissatisfied. We need to channelize this terrific energy in the right direction and for that we need to ensure there is a necessary degree of prosperity among them through creation of employment.

Sometimes the simplest of words or phrases inspire millions and bring pride to one's heart. For example the tag-line 'Made in India'. While it may just signify the origin of the product in hand, it can mean so much more. It can symbolize progress, realizing of potential, fulfillment of hopes and most importantly coming of age of a young nation. The first half of the twentieth century will see countries scrambling over scarce natural resources. Most of the developed nations will also be facing an aging population and hence a shortage of a skilled young workforce to take up the mantle of the previous generation. They will be desperately trying to attract talent from other countries with lucrative economic incentives and opportunities. Very few countries have actually taken up significant steps to face this oncoming crunch in man power. India in the meanwhile sits pretty with over 350 million people between the ages of 20-35 ready to work for the nation in the next 30 years.

Being an engineering undergraduate for the last few years in the premier technology institute of the country has given me a significant perspective on the overwhelming number of opportunities which lay before us. Our amazing workforce- both skilled and unskilled gives us an advantage which no other country enjoys. From my limited exposure to the industry and business world during the course of my studies, I can declare with reasonable levels of confidence that our youth power positions India with an unprecedented advantage to become the leader in the global manufacturing sector.

Right now China stands as the undisputed world leader in manufacturing. Walking along the aisles in a Wal-Mart or a Target, if one picks up anything whether it's a toy or a razor blade or even a Britney Spears poster, the omnipresent tag 'Made in China' is bound to be noticed. Industry and construction account for about 48% of China's GDP. Around 8% of the total manufacturing output in the world comes from China itself. China has become a preferred destination for the relocation of global manufacturing facilities. Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore has referred to China as "the Saudi Arabia of manufacturing". Its strength as an export platform has contributed to incomes and employment in China. All major corporations straddling across every sector have major manufacturing units in the Chinese heartland. In addition, for every product in the world there is a cheap Chinese substitute. For every brand in the world there is a cheaper fake Chinese version. The US is so dependent on Chinese imports that even gourmet food like the Florida soft-shell turtle makes its way to the upscale Manhattan restaurants from China!

Now India is not too way behind but a lot remains to be desired. Industry accounts for 27.6% of the GDP and employs around 17% of the total labor force. It is a global leader in textiles, processed gems and agricultural & food products but is way behind the other Asian powers in various other sectors. Now we have the youngest population in the world. When translated quantitatively it means that we have the largest youth population in the world and our labor force is poised to overtake China in the very near future. This might seem an anomaly in view of the disparity with the overall population Vis a Vis China but thanks to the religiously followed one child policy in China, the population there is an aging one unlike ours. Let's not forget that a huge and young labor population has associated issues of increased unemployment figures which may lead unto serious economic and political crises. Hence to sum up the next few years a huge youth population offers us tremendous opportunities to become a leader in the manufacturing sector which if missed might cause a downward spiral into social unrest.

Now that we have defined a target for our youth to achieve we can safely go about listing the impediments which have to be overcome. We can divide the concerned populace under two general categories of skilled and unskilled workers. The most important thrust from the administration should be to continuously strive to increase the numbers in the former at the cost of the later. Needless to say it is the importance attached to education reforms which will make it possible in the long run, but for immediate visible changes, practical vocation training institutes like the ITIs which require lower capital investments should be instituted without any discrimination on basis of states or geography. The ITIs along with imparting general skills should be attached to the local industries. The idea should be that the local youth can be trained at these institutes for jobs in the local industries and also make them self-sufficient enough to migrate to other places. This system places an inherent advantage for the local youth which is a crucial factor in a place like India with her myriad political and social problems. Next we have to pinpoint the sectors which we need to

develop. Again we can categorize those under two sections. One would consist of industries which have a sizeable presence in the country already. For example steel and automobiles. The other would be sectors which have a negligible presence like semiconductors and advanced instrumentation. One basic criterion we need to institute while investing in new sectors is keeping in mind their relevance to the domestic market. We cannot risk thousand of jobs on the fickleness of international commerce. For sectors which are already established, we need to keep global leadership as the projected target and hence expand. The expansion should be less through acquisitions abroad and more through consolidation and growth within the country. The private enterprises will need to pledge that creating jobs and increasing overall prosperity should be the guiding factor as far as company policy is concerned. The government in turn should make life easier for corporations who take the lead in creating jobs and increasing the technical and employability worth of the youth.

When we are trying to harness the full potential of over three hundred million young people, the above mentioned steps will not be enough. The most important initiative should be propagating the virtues of the entrepreneurial spirit. Indians are entrepreneurial by nature and as long as conditions in the market and government regulations border on the ideal, we can leave quite a few of those hundreds of millions of young people to chart their own course. Creation of new businesses and industries and intelligent adaptations to older businesses is the quickest way

to bring about prosperity. As long as the thousands of graduates passing out each other realize that they stand a good chance of being successful if they choose to start their own businesses over a regular job, they will take to their ideas with a dynamic spirit one sees only when they someone is their in their twenties. The government will have to relax policies with regard

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to starting businesses and ensure the youth do not feel that red tape and rampant corruption are the biggest obstacles to starting a new venture. This singular movement for reforms to facilitate start-ups has the potential of employing millions of young skilled and unskilled workers in every corner of the country. Quite a few of these enterprises will be in the manufacturing sector and hence labor intensive.

Production of goods will also give a tremendous fillip to the non-existent industrial research and development. The national research institutes will be flush with funds for improving and developing new products for the industry which will then augment higher education opportunities. Dependence on government support will decrease and simultaneously infrastructure will also show drastic improvement. As a result we will have much more qualified and adept graduates passing out who will go on to create more opportunities. Private research institutes will spring up hence by producing more qualified graduates and employing thousands. A nation which has been often been ridiculed for replicating foreign ingenuity, will at last begin having products and innovation it can call its own.

To bring about real change in the country, the youth will have to pick up the gauntlet. They are the only ones who can bring about much needed reforms both economically, politically and morally. Whatever be the ills of the nation, they can all be traced to the fact that there is a lack of prosperity. As a result we have a huge population of disgruntled youth whose moral, political and social virtues are getting erased. We cannot expect a young guy with a starving family to behave as an upright citizen. An empty stomach redefines ones idea of virtues. We need to ensure there is a basic level of wealth which will give every young Indian the freedom to think beyond his daily survival routine. Education and mass movements are long term solutions. We have to stop them from straying right now and there is no better antidote than employment. And of all sectors it is the manufacturing sector which will be the quickest solution of all. Not only will it employ millions, it will position India as a leader in the manufacturing world. We already have showed our prowess in the services sector in a tremendous manner. Its time to show that not only do we write good software; we also make products which changes the way humans live.

Thrust to manufacturing will have its associated problems. In an era where the threat to the environment has reached enormous proportions, we need to be very careful while setting up industries. Strict environmental guidelines will have to be enforced or else in our effort for quick affluence, we will doom our next generation. While labor laws will have to be revisited, a fine balance has to be maintained to ensure the huge working population's interests are always maintained and they do not fall prey to the worst excesses of crony capitalism. We must learn from the mistakes made by the American and Chinese manufacturers and make a conscious effort to avoid those same pitfalls. Barring this, we can look forward to a bright and promising century. As long as our youth are employed and happy, they will make every effort to bring long lasting changes to the decaying structures of our society. If we cannot ensure their daily survival this very youth will devour the nation because of their unhappiness. And the quickest and safest way to prevent that are three words- Made in India.

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Sayan Supratim Das

India's Youth Energy - Power and Potential - Your Vision

"In its sixty-second year as an independent nation, India is thriving, blossoming and escalating fast into a blessed land of prospects golden. It is here that I have found the 'New World'. The 'New World' is away from the Silicon Valley in the American continent, is distant from the greener pastures in the Pacific and stands remote from the many financial capitals of European mainland. It is here, in India, in whose memoirs, history has been written by the Europeans and whose future will be crafted by us. It is here that we shall flourish. It is here that we, India's youth have found our callings, our passions, our lives and our final destinations."

India is a thousand year old civilisation which resides in the very young sixty two year old sovereign nation. She holds a different connotation to each one of us in a very individual sense. To me India endures not for its cultural multiplicity, or valuable democracy, or its expansive progress in the economic arena or for its exceptionally vibrant history. In the 21st century I stand here for an India with a new definition. For if, we do not define India in its new form then we commit an injustice to its travels as a civilisation and country.

India now stands for ME, believing in the very fact of her capabilities, knowing well of her value in nation building and in making the planet a healthier dwelling to reside in. In essence ME is the youth, India is us, the youth of the country and not anything else.

The command of the country's future lies with the youth. This is the power of the youth. This is what is driving us towards newer purposes. The previous generations have come ahead with steps carved with eagerness, wisdom and extreme caution. Things now have changed, we are brash to the point of super-confidence, and we have a clout which we aggressively pursue for the fulfillment of our goals. This is the new façade of the country which till recently lagged behind, not because of lack of resources but lack of self confidence. This is the new youth.

The new freedom which we have seen in ourselves has given us a sense of liberty to become aware of ourselves. Suddenly we are strong; we have become secure under the weight of constant globalization, under the adulterated culture we are inheriting and are completely informed about the value we place on ourselves and also by the world.

This is the new freedom we are experiencing, where we are educated about our true dignity, after all a nation which is not under foreign rule has self respect which leads to self realisation. We are free now of the shackles which we bound ourselves by and now we are ready to go ahead. This is what we understand by the power and potential of the youth in the sixty-second year of our independence-freedom.

The asset of any country is its youth and not just a bulk of youth, but healthy and forceful youth. What sets a country into motion is a highly energized set of youth, who are vigorous in their mental faculty, robust in their physical well being and wholesomely spirited. These are the ingredients which chiefly drives the youth, the country and the possibly the very internal character of the country to ally with a progressive and an advanced sense of outlook.

In the 21st century the world is on the run, driving itself towards newer goals. The young seek contemporary destinations of greatness and in doing so we are stretching our physical state to the maximum. Even if work is technology based the hours put before a computer does drain our corporeal self. Knowing for a fact that our country has already conquered knowledge and acquired a knowledge based economy which is well the on the track of super stardom, it is time we conquer the physical frontier of being a healthy state, a state where not only our intellectual capacity is fashionable but an appropriate standard of physical faculty is well accepted as a norm.

Thus my foremost vision of youth power is health and the very dream for India is to be a healthy nation.

Indian scriptures have forever stressed on the coming together of three elements of life for a human to succeed- the mind, body and soul. In our country, the mind has always received invaluable importance. Enriching our minds with precious knowledge has always entertained an elevated privilege. This thought has translated into the very education of the soul. Our country's education system has always valued the joint erudition of the mind and soul. In this scheme of things lately our bodies have been heavily ignored.

The culture of fitness, of sports and of any physical activity has taken a back burner amongst the youth since the arrival of the heavily structured educational system which is highly competitive and stressful. The due time devoted to the system of competitive examinations post Grade X is a chief reason where students are allowed to only devote time to their books leaving their physical well being to a constant supply of food, which at the present moment relies heavily on junk. Eating habits have been heavily plagiarised from the west and we are leaving behind our extremely nutritious diet. This is leading to accumulation of number diseases in our lifestyle. Imagining a thirty something professional having to take pills for a heavy heart or a sugar-infested blood stream is an astonishing example of our callous attitude towards our health.

Our country harbours about a third of the world diabetics half of whom are below the age of thirty-five, our obesity rates are shooting off the charts, heart diseases are making the routine calls around the country for emergency hospital visits while sedentary lifestyles among the youth seems to bring about orthopedic distress to a new high. With statistics like these are marking their presence on every survey conducted over our health records, what terrifies me is the very fact that the youth features alarmingly on the wrong side of the results.

What can we do?

I hope the education structure can be altered in terms of admission to Engineering, Medical and other college courses which commences soon after the Grade XII. A structured admission process focusing on the over all presence of a student rather than on the narrow criteria of an admission or the board examinations should be used. This will reduce the load of the

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students and allow them to focus on every facet of their lives. As the center of attention will not be solely on academics, with an emphasis on overall growth, the focus leading to physical development will happen automatically.

The schools, colleges and universities around the country must emphasise on sports with not only a period dedicated to sporting activities but a serious development of sporting culture. Research has shown that involvement in sporting activities leads to a tremendous increase in concentration and discipline. These are faculties which are there for life long. One does not need to turn professional in a sport but to play it with an end in mind of development of self is extremely important to our future as a nation teeming with young people.

What China has done this Olympics will be remembered forever. No Asian country has ever done so well in any Summer Olympics. There was a lot of criticism for their very draconian and punishing regime on athletes. What it has created is a generation of super fit human resource. These very athletes on retirement will join their work force and work for the economy with fervour and raise the levels of economics fitness.

One saving grace of these regimes is that at least the very important value of discipline is being taught to the people from these model athletes. This is something which is missing in our country. We strain our young work force of students into tuitions of unnecessary demands, while forgetting the need of fitness amongst them. As a result far from promoting sports and robustness, we are cloning a new generation of obese educated people, most of whom leave our shores for foreign destinations looking for lucrative work.

For those who debate the value of education as opposed to sporting aptness, the Chinese have proven worldwide to be able students known for their superior work ethic, intelligence and academic excellence.

Our work force is our greatest strength, our supreme source of income and the only asset we have which will not perish so easily. What we overlook with convenience is that we do not really recognise our vast population as an asset

and views it instead as a liability. Though this is and should not be the case. The more number of people we harbour the more number of brains we are actually employing to drive the economy and the country. This leads to a larger share of intellectual capital which we invest for the country's sake.

It is true that we cannot become a sporting destination in such a small time span. It took China almost twenty-two years to achieve this feat. It took them a few steps by step models to be executed perfectly before the last of the many giant leaps took place at Beijing, culminating in the nation's collective dream of topping the medal's table this year. India has to be content with the sporadic success stories of a Sania Mirza, or a Saina Nehwal and a Saurav Ghoshal. Unless it is cricket we cannot have a team which can counter the best in the world and stand up to the challenge. What we can do convincingly is to create a generation aware of health maladies, which can make an informed decision regarding their health choices. There are enough health awareness programs, thanks to the Government and lifestyle television channels. What is desired now is the execution of such practices which can come only from self motivation. The example of China and other nations which have accomplished an enviable health record must do the trick.

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I have always believed that perseverance is nine-tenth of mastering any dream, any belief and any vision. This new century needs to mark a renewed sense of perseverance towards achieving good health amongst the youth. I understand our academic inclination but there is nothing wrong in mapping out a full range of smaller goals in the process of planning the bigger ones. The strength of the youth lies in its tenacity and this will lead us to our vision. One lesson we must learn is to never overlook the power of simplicity. My vision is simple enough- Health first as without this ornament our appearance might just not measure up.

What is remarkable about our country is that it has given the youth the ability to voice their opinions and choices without fear of any retribution. She has given us a platform to forge ahead in any field be it sports, the armed forces, politics and entertainment in turn making us strong and independent that we are today. This independence is the translation of the liberal thoughts of the country to its older citizen who happen to be our parents, mentors and guides. It is due to their blessings and the opportunities that they gave us that we are what we are today. Thus it is our duty to give back to them.

This brings me to my very first vision of and for the youth and of the country- giving back to our parents as they progress to their second childhood that is the ripened years. In the winter of their lives it is our duty and my vision to see that we respect our leading lights into a life where they can cherish the last lap of their very accomplished existence.

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Shashank Kumar

Think Again

Foreword

Even as I type this essay, there is a lot that is being said and done in response to the recent terrorist attacks in my city, Mumbai; much of this response, in my opinion, can best be described as instinctive, reactive and brash. There have been very few sincere, and sustained attempts by the common public to take a step back and analyse the implications of an incident of this magnitude - at the level of day-to-day interaction and at the level of kitchen-table conversation. For evidence of this phenomenon, all one needs to do is travel by the city's local trains, or even visit a college campus or two, and listen carefully.

Almost as a rule, it is assumed that analysis, investigation and explanation is the job of the police, the government, the judiciary, religious leaders, and the media. In the clutches of a system where progress is determined by pace and defined by quantity, somewhere we seem to have lost our ability to reflect, to contemplate, to question and to comprehend.

English-American writer Aldous Huxley has aptly observed, "Most of one's life ... is a prolonged attempt to prevent thinking."

Youth of the Nation

Considerations made regarding the youth of the nation acquire a variety of meanings depending on who is the one making the considerations, what her interests are, and of course the larger context within which these considerations are to be located. In general however, the youth as a category, as a 'social grouping' is aged below thirty years and is predominantly male.

All human beings have the potential to do things well and bring positive changes in society. What makes the youth so special? Personally, I feel that we are of interest to politicians, businessmen, god-men, and members of the older generation in general because of our age and nothing else. They see in us the persistence of their lifestyles, worldviews and institutions and to some extent they are justified in doing so. However, simply ordering our lives in accordance with their ideals is antithetical to the intellectual and creative potential that we carry within us, that we can wield to shape our social reality. I am not advocating a blatant rejection of the experiences of the older generations; and neither am I calling for a dismissal of cultural values, traditions, institutions, etc.. We need the older generation as much as they need us.

Placing the category of the youth within the context of my argument on the degeneration of contemplative life, I would like to state that the older generations need to trust the youth of the country and support us as well as they can, as we go about conceptualising and realising our social reality - each of us fulfilling the potential that we carry within ourselves, consequently giving meaning to our existence.

Education - by Whom, for Whom and Why?

There exists a poignant, if not apparent, link between the current condition of contemplative life in India and the state of the education system in the country. Much has been said about the shortcomings of the Indian education system, and little has been done about it. Every once in a while, studies are conducted, observations are made, and measures are suggested. Eventually, little is done and the cycle continues; not because we Indians are “like that only”, but because of the manner in which education has been conceptualised and presented to the masses. Rather than having as its basis the role of learning and thought in enriching human life - both individually and communally - education in India is based on colonial notions of progress and modernity. Just like the modernised, industrialised, “developed” countries of the “first world”, we regarded education as a process that would equip the future generations of the country to make India economically independent and a world superpower.

George Orwell’s classic dystopian novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, paints a dreary picture of modern human society; a society where a totalitarian regime - The Party - asserts and maintains its authority by systematically altering past and present social realities, and by constantly monitoring the words and actions of the people in a bid to minimise and eradicate ‘Thoughtcrime’. The Party regarded Thoughtcrime as the highest form of criminal activity because it believed that human reality only exists in the mind of the individual person, and that an individual’s thoughts influence her words and consequently, her actions. Although the nature of the Indian state is far from Orwellian, its attitude toward independent thinking, innovation,

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and creativity - by and large - can best be described as indifferent; this indifference creates a condition of voluntary suppression of thought among the masses, and consequently we are unable to deal with pressing social problems because all the “available” solutions don’t seem to work.

Independent Thinking Fora

It is within this broad context that I would like to propose the introduction and establishment of ‘Independent Thinking Fora’ (ITFs). An Independent Thinking Forum (ITF) is to be an avenue, a platform, for youth - students mainly, and young professionals - to help each other think, learn and grow. The intellectual bases of this idea lie in the domain of Constructivist Learning Theory that finds applicability in the fields of Psychology and Education.

Constructivism is a perspective on learning that focuses on how learners actively create or construct knowledge out of their experiences. There are two major trends within constructivist theory - Psychological Constructivism, which espouses that a person learns by mentally organising and reorganising new experiences or information; and Social Constructivism, which focuses on the relationship(s) between the learner and more knowledgeable individual(s). ITFs will be appreciative of a diversity of perspectives and will work with

the assumption that open interaction of this kind will encourage intellectual growth, and that such changes in thinking will govern change in our actions. Thus, the widespread operation of such fora that encourage innovation, creativity, analytical ability and insightful articulation will be able to form an effective base for fomenting individual and collective action that will serve to bring desirable social change for all. The ITFs will also work with the assumption that no one individual can know everything there is to know, and that different individuals can pool together what unique knowledge they might possess and consequently create new and valuable knowledge.

There are to be no restrictions with regard to the choice of topic taken up for discussion in the forum, or the manner in which ITF sessions are to be conducted. Care should be taken to ensure maximum interaction, participation and learning. Every participant's perspective is to be respected. Participants are to use their creativity to democratically come up with themes to be engaged with at the fora, as well as the way in which the session is to be conducted.

The first step in this endeavour will involve setting up an ITF in my own college and subsequently developing a network of ITFs across colleges in my city. Now, the reason for choosing colleges as a starting point in this exercise is chiefly a matter of convenience. It is a place where one can find a more-or-less constant crowd over a period of at least one or two years; one can have access to libraries, multimedia facilities, experienced staff - all of which can enhance the learning environment; one can identify and/or train individuals to initiate ITFs in their communities and in other colleges; collaborations between different colleges can bring people living in different areas of the city, studying different subjects, from different backgrounds and with unique life experiences together.

After an inter-collegiate ITF network is more or less in place, the thrust will be on having mixed-college ITFs at different venues in the city, as against students from one college meeting students of the same college, in the same college. Simultaneously, efforts will be made to encourage colleges in other cities of the country to undertake such initiatives as well. After this kind

of an ITF network - in the truest possible sense of the term - is in place and functioning relatively smoothly, the next step would involve reaching out to schools. ITFs in schools would mainly cater to students from the 8th standard onwards.

This in itself is an enormous task, and one that cannot be achieved without dedication and conviction to the ideals underlying this exercise. Alumni of colleges will be able to play a central role in this process, if they choose to take a year off after graduating to help full-time in the ITF activities. Alumni of various schools can play a major role in taking the ITFs to schools. Besides the conducting of the sessions and encouraging learning and thinking, through the ITF activities, the youth can be equipped with relevant soft-skills and technical skills that they would help them at work and at home.

If the ITFs manage to acquire a large enough presence within a particular area, a board or a panel of distinguished individuals who support this cause along with the dedicated, innovative, and proactive ITF members can be set up to provide assistance and guidance as and when required, and generally review the activities of the many ITFs in that city. This board however will not be able to directly intervene in the functioning of any local ITF. There will be no central committee, or executive committee, or CEO of any sort. Each individual is regarded as being equal, and as being responsible for her learning, as well as for the learning of other participant members of her ITF group.

The ITF by nature will be a democratic body based on the fundamental rights and duties enshrined in the Constitution, that will enable the youth to be responsible and free citizens, who can reason, question and comprehend. Most importantly, its activities will be a supplement to the standard education that the participants receive in schools and colleges; its activities will be activities that give them impetus to push the boundaries of their thought, and consequently make them more alert, aware and sensitive citizens when they act.

This project will initially be executed in cities, and eventually move toward the smaller towns and rural areas. This is due to the fact that the resources needed for this kind of networking - chiefly transport, communication and information sources - are more readily available in urban set-ups. Also, this move is about changing mindsets and modes of thinking. It seeks to slowly but surely change the way we think about issues that are central to our country's well-being. It will be a move that will question the ideas of growth, of prosperity, of development, of the environment, of needs, of resources, of the state, of democracy, of power, of terrorism, of security that are often taken for granted. It will be a complete reevaluation and recasting of the "system" in all its forms, and an agent that will enable the Indian people to find unity in diversity, and live together in community and harmony despite our differences.

"It seeks to slowly but surely change the way we think about issues that are central to our country's well-being."

Afterword

In conclusion, I would like to say that the Independent Thinking Fora movement does not aspire to become something big merely for the sake of being recognised as something big. It seeks to define its success or its failure in terms of the peace and prosperity of the nation of India as a whole.

"Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows."

George Orwell, 1984

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उत्कर्ष अमिताभ

भारत की युवा-शक्ति: दशा और दिशा

ययातियों और भृगु ऋषियों की परम्परा एक नया संदर्भ पा गयी है ! ज्ञानवृद्धि भारत दिन-दिन युवा हो रहा है ! दो हजार बीस तक औसत भारतीय सिर्फ 29 साल का होगा, औसत चीनी 37 साल का, औसत अमरीकी 45 का, यूरोप और जापान की औसत उम्र 48 होगी ! अर्थशास्त्री कहते हैं, “Demography is destiny” पर यहाँ नियति-निर्धारण का एक मानक प्रजातंत्र की सफलता भी है ! परिवार-नियोजन बड़े पैमाने पर यहाँ भी लागू हुआ था - ‘हम दो हमारे दो’ के नारे मेरे बचपन में भी सरकारी अस्पतालों की पीली दीवारों पर लाल तिकोण के नीचे बड़े अक्षरों में लिखे रहते थे, पर यहाँ प्रजातांत्रिक परम्परा के अनुसार कोई जबरदस्ती नहीं हुई, और समय ने ऐसी करवट ली कि अभिशाप ही वरदान बन गया ! चुपके से ये नारे लिंग-परीक्षण, भ्रूण हत्या के परिणामों की ओर ध्यान दिलाने वाले नारों में बदल गये - कब, कैसे - गौर किया ?

चीन में परिवार नियोजन सख्ती से लागू हुआ था ! नतीजा है चार-दो-एक संरचना वाले करोड़ों परिवार जहाँ दादी-दादा, नानी-नाना - चार, माँ-बाप - दो और बच्चा - एक, वह भी ‘नन्हा सम्राट’ सिण्ड्रोम का शिकार यानी ललबबुआ ! एक सन्तान का अर्थ यह भी कि न उसका कोई चाचा-ताऊ, मामा-फूफा होगा, न चाची-ताई-मौसी-मामी-फुआ और उनकी आल-औलादों का वह पूरा मस्ती-दस्ता जिससे हम सब भारतीय युवाओं का जीवन मदमस्त बना रहता है। कोई तो बात होगी कि चाँद भी यहाँ मामा है और चिप्स का पैकेट भी ‘अंकल’ ! अकेला बच्चा स्वार्थी, नकचढ़ा हो सकता है या उदास विलगाववादी - व्यक्तिवादिता की पराकाष्ठा ! युवा हो भी गया तो सहयोग, सहकारिता, आपसदारी और मिल-बाँटकर खाने-पीने, हँसने-रोने के सहज प्रशिक्षण का अभाव उसमें ‘युवाशक्ति’ का वह उच्छल उल्लास कहाँ से उठने देगा जिसका प्रतीक ‘मस्ती की पाठशाला’ में पढ़े भारतीय युवा होते हैं, वे दिग्भ्रान्त युवा भी जिनकी पढ़ाई-लिखाई न हो पाई, न मन-लायक नौकरी मिली जिन्हें, जो आजीवन सड़कों पर आवारा घूमने को अभिशप्त रहे। पर उनपर हम बाद में आते हैं, क्योंकि उनकी समस्या एक विकट समस्या है, पहले भारत के औसत युवा-चेहरों के कुछ और आँकड़े लें !

अर्थशास्त्री कह रहे हैं कि भारत की विकास कथा उसकी युवाशक्ति की विकास कथा है ! परिवार-नियोजन कार्यक्रमों की विफलता या क्रमिक सफलता जो ‘बूम पीढ़ी’ या ‘डेमोग्राफिक बल्ज’ पैदा कर गयी, प्रच्छन्न वरदान की तरह आर्थिक विकास के नये क्षितिज पर दमकी ! आज जनसंख्या का अतिरेक ‘मानव-संसाधन’ के रूप में आँका जा रहा है ! अन्य सारे विकसित या विकासशील देश, जहाँ परिवार-नियोजन सफल रहा, वृद्धों और अथेड़ लोगों से भरे पड़े हैं - बच्चों और युवकों की संख्या वहाँ उत्तरोत्तर घट रही है !

यूरोपीय देशों के सरताज चिंतित हैं कि यूरोप तो जल्दी ही मानचित्र से गायब हो जाएगा - इतने कम लोग हैं वहाँ खासकर युवक और बच्चे ! फ्रेंच राष्ट्रपति, जाक चिर के शब्दों में कहें तो यह महादेश “is fast becoming a place of old people, liveing in old ideas.” बाज़ार में काम करने लायक लोग ही नहीं तो श्रमशक्ति आयात करनी ही होगी और मेधा भी ! कहाँ से? भारत से ही तो ! भारत के पास 47 मिलियन अतिरिक्त युवक हैं - फरटि से अँगरेजी बोल पाने वाले 2 मिलियन ग्रैजुए, 15000 लॉ स्नातक, 4000 पी.एच.डी. ! और 2.10 मिलियन अभियन्ताओं का पूल हर साल 3,00,000 की दर से बढ़ ही रहा है !

पर इससे भी इनकार कैसे करें कि यह सत्य का सिर्फ एक पक्ष है ! भारत की युवा टीम में टेलिकॉम, बैंकिंग, प्रबन्धन सेक्टर के जो इंजीनियर, अफसर, विश्लेषक ‘धूम मचा ले, धूम मचा ले, धूम’ - भाव से दुनिया-भर में घूमते हैं - बड़ी-बड़ी पे - पैकेटों के धमाके के साथ - उनकी औसत उम्र सत्ताइस साल बताई जाती है, किंतु इनमें कितने झुग्गी-झोपड़ियों और सरकारी स्कूलों के हैं। - यह सोचकर गर्दन शर्म से झुक जाती है !

कोई तो बात होगी कि चाँद भी यहाँ मामा है और चिप्स का पैकेट भी ‘अंकल’! अकेला बच्चा स्वार्थी, नकचढ़ा हो सकता है ...

मध्यवर्ग शिक्षा-ऋण ले सकता है पर वंचित वर्ग ? उसके पास बन्धक रखने को क्या है ? कल्याणकारी राज्य कोई कल्याण करता दिखाई नहीं देता ! विकास का 'माई-बाप', 'कोटा-राशन-धर्मशाला' मॉडेल नए युवा को रास आए भी तो कैसे ? उसके पिता और पितामह - दोनों की हालत गवाह है कि विकास का यह मॉडेल अन्दर से घुना गया है !

हवा में बात करने से अच्छा है कि किसी वंचित मित्र-परिवार की तीन पीढ़ियों की कथा मैं उठाऊँ और उसके आश्रय ही समझने की कोशिश करूँ कि विकास का वह भव्य समाजवादी मॉडेल चरमराया तो कैसे ! और अब कैसे क्या करें कि भारत की युवा शक्ति के उस 77% की प्रच्छन्न सम्भावनाओं के साथ भी न्याय हो सके तो अभी स्कूल डॉप आउट है, जिन्हें रिक्शा चलाना या खोंमचा लगाना पसन्द नहीं, जो कुछ विशिष्ट करने को छटपटा रहे हैं, कभी इधर जा रहे हैं।, कभी उधर, बार-बार लॉटरी के टिकट खरीद रहे हैं, बड़े-बड़े अंतरराष्ट्रीय बैनरों की लोकल अनुऔतियाँ, एक्सपोर्ट सरप्लस के जूते कपड़े, सेकेण्ड हैंड मोबाइल और टीवी ! बड़े बैंगलों से लगे सर्वेयर्स/विस्थापन-बस्ती या जे.जे. कॉलोनियों के ये सारे युवा बाशिन्दे ! क्या है इनका दोष जो अपने ही देश में इनको दोयम दर्जे की नागरिकता जीनी पड़ती है ! मुक्तिबोध ने ईमानदारी की रोटी खाने वाली जिस गर्वीली गरीबी का जिक्र किया था, आज के वंचित युवा उससे सन्तुष्ट हों भी तो कैसे ! पैसों को खुदा माननेवाली हिप-हॉप अपसंस्औति हर जगह उनका मुँह चिढ़ा देती है और 'कौन बनेगा करोड़पति' जैसे हजार रिप्लिटी शोज़ में वे एस.एम.एस. पर एस.एम.एस. दागे जाते हैं कि एक मौका मिले कुछ कर दिखाने का, शाहरूख खान और अमिताभ बच्चन बन जाने का। मुकद्दर का सिकन्दर, सिद्ध होने को तैयार बण्टियों-बबलियों की एक पूरी फौज तैयार है कि एक मौका मिले ! मौका जो मृगमरीचिका है क्योंकि वह प्रायोजित होता है ! हर कार्यक्रम प्रायोजित, हर नौकरी प्रायोजित, हर मौका प्रायोजित !

चूँकि गम्भीर ज्ञान-विज्ञान, कला-संस्औति और संगीत के सारे दरवाजे उनके लिए बन्द हैं, अपनी गहनतर बौद्धिक या आध्यात्मिक सम्भावनाओं में उनकी आस्था बचपन के आरम्भिक धक्कों/चोटों/कलह-कोलाहल/अनगिन विस्थापनों में ही बिला गई, सिर्फ देह ही एक पूँजी बची जिसके सतर्क नियोजन से पैसे कमाए जा सकते हैं और क्रमिक पहचान भी उगाही जा सकती है। जाहिर है कि जिम और ब्यूटी-पार्लर जे.जे. कॉलोनियों और विस्थापन-बस्तियों में भी है ! उनकी भी दीवारों पर अंतरराष्ट्रीय मॉडलों की तस्वीरें हैं। और उन फिल्मी अभिनेताओं की जिनकी बाइसेप की गाँठें पाइरेटेड कैसटों की सामूहिक ब्यूइंग में वे गिनते बैठते हैं। पर पेट-भर खाना मिले तब तो बाइसेप बने !

कभी-कभी मैं अपने सर्वेयर्स क्वार्टर्स के बाहर लगे कूड़े के ढेर पर गौर करता हूँ और मेरा हाथ कलेजे पर आ जाता है ! वहाँ न फलों के छिलके होते हैं।, न सब्जियों के, न दूध के पैकेट, केवल सस्ती शराब की बोतलें और उन जूठनों का शेषांश जो महरी चार घरों से बटोर कर लाती है ! बस सिनेमा-टी.वी. और इस खान-पान पर कैसे पैदा होगी वह युवा पीढ़ी जिसका सपना 'यंग इण्डिया' में गाँधी ने देखा था या अपने अनगिन आलेखों में भगतसिंह, सुभाषचंद्र बोस, विवेकानन्द, महर्षि अरविन्द और टैगोर ने !

साम्यवादी देशों का इतिहास जब पढ़ने बैठता हूँ या 'हाउ द स्टील वॉज टेम्पर्ड' जैसे उपन्यास तो लगता है, युवा शक्ति के एक आदर्शवादी विनियोग का यह एक सुगढ़ रास्ता था ! युवकों का आवेग चाहता है एक हुंकार, एक डॉग्मेटिक असर्शन ! दिनकर जैसे कवियों ने इसका मर्म समझा था, तब भी उनकी वे कविताएँ स्कूल-कॉलेज की वाद-विवाद प्रतियोगिताओं में इतनी लोकप्रिय हैं ! ! मार्क्स का दिलाया हुआ यह विश्वास बड़ा विश्वास था कि मनुष्य अपनी नियति का निर्माता खुद ही है - युवकों की मर्दानगी को एक बड़ी चुनौती है यह कि वे चाहें तो संकल्प-शक्ति के समवेत विनियोग से अपनी ही नहीं, अपने पूरे समाज का नक्शा बदल सकते हैं ! ! "you have nothing to lose but your hains" कोई दैवी शक्ति नहीं मदद करने वाली, जो करना है, खुद ही करना है ! यह विश्वास भी बड़ा विश्वास था कि गरीबी ईमानदारी का प्रमाणपत्र है - इस बात का पुष्टीकरण कि आपने किसी का हक नहीं छीना, मेहनत की रोटी खाई है, आपका चरित्रबल बढ़ा है और संघशक्ति बढ़ी है, दुनिया में आप जैसे शोषितों की ही संख्या ज्यादा है, एक बड़ी दुनिया है जो आपके आगे खुली है - "workers of the world, unite." बंधु परिवार की धारणा भी युवकों को आकर्षक लगती थी, भूमिगत जीवन जीना भी एक बड़ी साहसिकता थी, एक बड़ी चुनौती जिसके प्रति युवा आकर्षित होते रहे, खासकर वे जिनका भाव-पक्ष प्रबल था !

लेकिन अहिंसा और प्रजातांत्रिक मूल्यों का आदर्श नव-स्वतंत्र भारत को 'मिश्र मॉडेल' की तरफ ले गया; अधिनायकतंत्र भारत को बर्दाश्त नहीं था, चाहे वह 'प्रोलितारियत' का ही अधिनायकतंत्र क्यों नहीं हो, पर रूस एक लाल सितारे की तरह विकास के नेहरूवादी मॉडेल में भी झिलमिलाता तो रहा ! मेरे दादाजी कहते हैं कि राजकपूर की फिल्म का यह गाना भारत की मिश्र आर्थिक नीति और विदेश-नीति का भी अच्छा खुलासा करता है ! दाढ़ी बनाते हुए वे अक्सर ये गाना गुनगुनाते हैं और मैं सोच में पड़ जाता हूँ कि आखिर कैसे यह गाना भूमण्डलीकरण (कहिए, भूमण्डलीकरण) के बाद के भारत का भी पूर्वाभास कराता है, उस समय का 'आवारा'/'अनाड़ी' हमारे समय के फूटलूज लेबर, हिरामनों और गोबरों से भिन्न हैं तो कैसे : 'मेरा जूता है जापानी/यह पतलून इंग्लिशतानी/सर पर लाल टोपी रूसी/फिर भी दिल है हिन्दुस्तानी !'

जे.एन.यू. में मेरे मामा पढ़ते थे ! शुरू के दिनों के जे.एन.यू. की याद करते हुए वे बताते हैं कि नेहरू के दिखाए हुए सपने टूटने लगे तो भारत की एक पूरी पीढ़ी देवदासों की पीढ़ी हो गयी - विफल प्रेम-कहानियों का एक महावृत्त, आत्मघाती ढंग की पियक्कड़ी और भयानक भाषणबाजियाँ ! अवशिष्ट दर्शन के रूप में साम्यवाद का तेज अब भी कहीं-कहीं कायम था, पर बाहर की दुनिया से सरोकार चूँकि न के बराबर ही रह गया था, जे.एन.यू. शोधार्थियों में, न वे शोध पूरे कर पाए, न क्रांति ! हँसकर वे यह भी कहते थे कि M.A., J.N.U. मजनु कहलाते थे और यही वह समय था जब भारत में भी आरामकुर्सी और ठर्रा-ब्राण्ड के साम्यवाद का जन्म हुआ !

और बाहर की दुनिया में ये हुआ कि कांग्रेस कुर्सी की राजनीति करने लगी। बहुगुणा के वक्त यानी 73 में कुर्सीयाँ और चुनाव-टिकट बजाप्ता विकने ही लगे जिसके खिलाफ 'दूसरी क्रांति' वाला आह्वान जयप्रकाश नारायण ने पहले गुजरात में किया, फिर बिहार में। आपातकाल-मीसा- तथाकथित दूसरी

आजादी, मण्डल-कमण्डल-विश्वायन-दलित और स्त्री आंदोलन, राज्यों के विलगाववादी तेवर, राजनीति का अपराधीकरण और अब यह बीहड़ आतंकवाद ... भारतीय इतिहास के एक-एक विकट मोड़ पर भारत के युवकों का आवाह तो हुआ है और शोषण भी !

उनकी तकलीफें किसी ने न समझीं - शिक्षा-व्यवस्था उतनी ही उबाऊ बनी रही ! हर व्यक्ति किसी-न-किसी ढंग से विशिष्ट होता है, प्यार और मान पाने-लायक, और शिक्षा का उद्देश्य होना चाहिए हर व्यक्ति के उस 'विशिष्ट' कोने का उद्घाटन जो उसको वैयक्तिक जीवन में ढेर-से प्रेम और सार्वजनिक जीवन में ढेर-से मान-सम्मान का पात्र बनाए ! अधिकतर युवा दिग्भ्रांत इसलिए हैं कि उन्हें पता ही नहीं, क्या है उनका विशिष्ट कोना ! लगातार मार-धाड़ डॉट-टपटकर उनके दोष तो गिनाए जाते हैं, पर विशेषताएँ बतायी नहीं जाती !

इस उम्र में विरति जेण्डर के लोगों का अधिकाधिक प्रशान्त साहचर्य, उनके साथ मिलकर जीवन के छोटे-बड़े सपने देखने और सपने पूरा करने की दिशा में किए गये सारे समवेत प्रयास जीवन को सरस और सुन्दर बनाते हैं ! माँ बताती है कि पहले के शिक्षक छात्र-छात्राओं की छोटी-छोटी टोलियाँ लेकर साथ निकलते थे; श्रमदान की खातिर या स्काउट के रूप में, अलग-अलग प्रशिक्षण केन्द्रों में अलग-अलग गाँवों और शहरों में, यों ही भ्रमण या वन-भोज के लिए ! संयुक्त परिवारों में भाई-बहनों और विपरीत जेण्डर के दूरस्थ रिश्तेदारों का साथ-साथ मिलकर कुछ करना जीवन की निर्वन्ध ऊर्जा को दिशा देता था; दूसरे जेण्डर के समवयस्क लोगों के साहचर्य में कोई भी व्यक्ति अपने व्यक्तित्व का सर्वोत्तम खुद ही धीरे-धीरे उद्घाटित कर लेता है ! साहचर्य जन्म प्रेम भी आत्मप्रबोधक दृष्टि विकसित करता ही है जिसे अँगरेजी में 'एनोबलिंग प्रेजेंस' कहते हैं वह अक्सर विपरीत जेण्डर का ही कोई समवयस्क होता है ! गाँव-गाँव, शहर-शहर कुछ ऐसे युवा-केन्द्र विकसित होने चाहिए जहाँ हर वर्ग, हर वर्ण, हर धर्म के युवक-युवतियाँ साथ बैठें, विश्व-प्रसिद्ध फिल्मों के सीडी साथ देखें, विश्व-साहित्य पढ़ें - मिलकर पढ़ें - उनपर चर्चा करें ! ऐसे अध्ययन मण्डलों में ही भारत की युवा-शक्ति नई दिशा पाएगी ! कारियत्री क्षमताओं का विकास होगा जैसा कि जन-नाट्य टोलियों में होता था या इप्ता की टोलियों में ! बुद्धि-कोष, हृदय-कोष और सामाजिक सरोकार - तीनों समृद्ध होते रहे। 'पॉवर्टी ऐक्शन लैब', एम.आई.टी. में कार्यरत अभिजित बैनर्जी के आँकड़े बताते हैं कि अशिक्षा, गरीबी और बदहाली ही वंचित युवाओं से कई को अतिवादी राजनीतिक संगठनों की ओर ले गई या अन्य अपराधी गिरोहों की ओर।

दिग्भ्रान्त क्यों होता है कोई ? शक्ति है ! व्यवस्था उसके सर्जनात्मक उपयोग का कोई रास्ता नहीं सुझाएगी तो वह विध्वंस के रास्ते ही सही, पर फूटेली जरूर ! भूख और अपमान आदमी के विवेक को ग्रहण लगा देते हैं ! भूख से गुड़ गुड़ाता हुआ पेट और अपमान से सुलगता हुआ माथा किसी की नहीं सुनता ! सर्वाइवल-फिट में रहते हैं, बाई के झोंक में ! और अपहचान भी एक तरह का अपमान ही है ! प्रेम और पहचान की तड़प हर युवा हृदय में धड़कती है ! जब कोई नौका ही न हो अपना वैशिष्ट्य सिद्ध करने का, आदमी उबल जाता है ! हालाँकि खास तरह के धर्मोन्माद में उलझे इधर कुछ पढ़े-लिखे, (लाखों की तनखाह पानेवाले) सम्भ्रान्त युवा अभियन्ता भी आतंकवादी विस्फोटों के पीछे खड़े हो गये हैं, पर ज्यादातर यही होता है कि अभाव की

सन्तानें अपराध-जगत् में शरण पाती हैं ! छोटा राजन सफाई कर्मचारी का लड़का था ! अबू सलेम की माँ बीड़ियाँ बनाती थी। छोटा शकील मुम्बई की झोपड़पट्टी में बड़ा हुआ था ! मुक्तिबोध ने ईमानदारी की रोटी खाने वाली जिस 'गर्वीली गरीबी' का जिक्र किया था, उसके मॉडेल समाज में बचे ही कहाँ !

एक आदर्श की तलाश युवावस्था में होती ही है - अभिभावक, शिक्षक, राजनीतिक या धार्मिक नेता अपना विश्वास खो चुके हैं ! सांसारिक आइकन, अभिनेता, खिलाड़ी, डब्ल्यू.डब्ल्यू.एफ. के पहलवान ही नये रोल मॉडेल हैं ! प्रेम का सन्धान भी रोल-मॉडेल का सन्धान है किंतु वहाँ भी तलाश जल्दी पूरी नहीं होती ! 'अतिपरिचय के दोष' से, लगातार साथ बने रहने के कारण कैम्पस के प्रेम में भी मुलम्मे जल्दी उतरते हैं ! विवाह-संस्था में आस्था रही नहीं और सहजीवन की खातिर ये दो संकल्प तो जरूरी हैं - एक तो दोनों का आर्थिक स्वावलम्बर, दूसरा, बच्चे पैदा करने से परहेज (डबल इन्कम, नो किड्स)

... दोनों की दोनों शर्तें कठिन तो है। न ! और कठिन है जीवन इस मुद्दे पर भी कि सन्तोष न अतिशय विलास और उत्सवीकरण (कारनिवलाइजेशन) की वृत्ति में है, न ठेठ मशीन और कम्प्यूटर हो जाने में ! न जानवर बनना है, न मशीन, आगे बढ़ना है किंतु किसी का भी हक छीने बिना और उन सब साथियों के प्रति स्नेह और सम्वेदना बनाए रखनी है जिनका जीवन किसी कारण पटरी से उतर गये और जो कहीं के भी नहीं रहे। उनको दिशा देने में लगातार लगता है - जजमेण्टल हुए बिना, इस गम्भीर दायित्व बोध के साथ कि उनकी इस दुर्दशा के जिम्मेदार कहीं-न-कहीं हम भी हैं ! इसमें क्लैरेंस डैरो के 'नॉक ऑन द डोर' की ये पंक्तियाँ हमारी मदद कर सकती हैं :

"Before any progress can be made indealing with crime (indiscipline/terror), the world must fully realize that crime is only a part of conduct, that every act, criminal or otherwise, follows a cause, that given the same conditions the same results will follow for ever and ever, any one can reason from cause to effect and know that the crimes of youth are really the crimes of the state and society, which by neglect and active participation have made the individual what it is."

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